



A guide to accessing crucial COVID-19 treatments in Maine

by **Jessica Piper**

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In this photo provided by Pfizer, a lab technician places a Paxlovid tablet into a machine which applies pressure to test the pill's physical strength, in Freiburg, Germany in December, 2021. Credit: Pfizer / AP

COVID-19 could be back on the rise in Maine with wastewater testing has shown greater concentrations of virus across the state following the arrival of a more contagious strain of the omicron variant.

The latest wave of the virus should not be as deadly as previous ones. Mainers who are at high risk of severe disease have more access to therapeutic options, such as monoclonal antibodies and antiviral pills, that have been shown to substantially reduce risk of developing severe COVID-19. But availability of therapeutics remains limited and treatments must be accessed within a few days of testing positive to be effective.

Here is what you need to know if you or a loved one contracts COVID-19.

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Who is eligible for COVID-19 treatments?

Eligibility for COVID-19 therapeutics is based on risk of severe disease, which is assessed based on a number of factors, including age and medical history. Your eligibility to receive treatment will ultimately be determined by a medical provider.

A range of medical conditions can make someone eligible for COVID-19 treatments, including less common conditions such as cancer or being an organ transplant recipient, as well as more common ones such as obesity, pregnancy and diabetes.

See a longer list of conditions that can make someone eligible for treatment from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention [here](#).

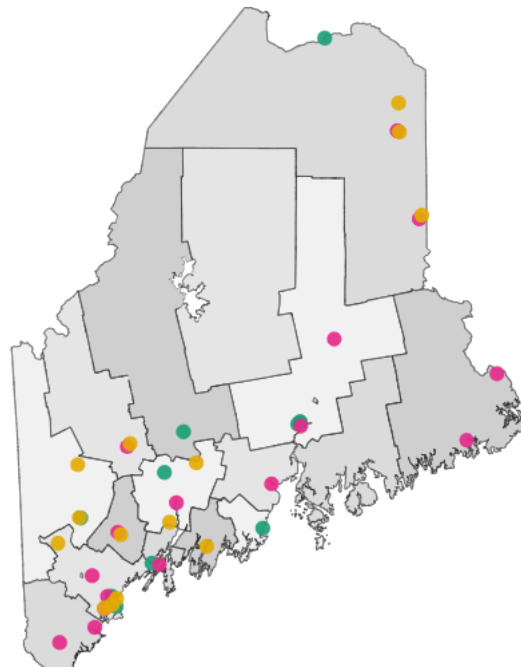
Where can I get treatment?

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Patients who test positive for the virus at home may also be able to pick up antiviral pills from certain pharmacies, provided that they receive a prescription from a health care provider first. Use the map below to see what facilities offer COVID-19 treatment.

Where to get COVID-19 treatments in Maine

Test to Treat facilities offer testing and treatment for eligible patients, as do certain **Hospitals**. Oral medications can also be picked up at **Pharmacies**, but a prescription is required.



Source: Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services • Chart by Jessica Piper for the Bangor Daily News

When should I get treatment?

The treatments for COVID-19 are most effective within the first few days

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been more than five to seven days since you tested positive, you may not be eligible for treatment.

Do the treatments still work against the new omicron variant?

Yes, treatments offered by health care providers remain effective. As the highly contagious BA.2 variant has become dominant in Maine and across the U.S., federal regulators have instructed health care providers to stop offering certain monoclonal antibody treatments that are not effective against this strain. But other antibody treatments are still effective and remain in use.

Antiviral treatments, such as Paxlovid, work against all known variants of the virus.

Can the treatments have negative interactions?

In clinical trials, approved therapeutics have been highly safe and effective in reducing the likelihood of severe disease from COVID-19. However, there are limitations on eligibility for patients with certain medical conditions or taking certain prescription drugs.

For example, the antiviral pill Paxlovid is not recommended for patients with severe kidney or liver problems. In some cases, a provider may recommend a kidney or liver function test before prescribing Paxlovid, or they may recommend the patient receive monoclonal antibodies instead.

Make sure to inform your health care provider of any health conditions or medications you may be taking so they can recommend the appropriate treatment.

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It depends. The government has purchased COVID-19 treatments to distribute for free. In some cases, health care providers may charge a patient's insurance for the cost of administering the treatment, which can sometimes lead to a co-pay — although the cost of early treatments for COVID-19 is much less than the cost of a hospital stay.

If you do not have health insurance, you can [apply for an emergency program](#) through MaineCare to cover the costs of testing and treatment.

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