

**TO:** Vermont Health Care Providers and Health Care Facilities  
**FROM:** Allison Lafferty, MD, Health Department Epidemiologist

## **Increasing Paxlovid Prescribing**

### **BACKGROUND:**

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) is proven to reduce hospitalizations and death in people who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 and are at [risk of developing severe illness](#).

Paxlovid, which is now widely available in Vermont pharmacies for people who meet [eligibility criteria](#), appears to be currently underutilized, related to a variety of patient and system-related factors. This means Vermonters are at risk of preventable hospitalization and death due to inadequate receipt of Paxlovid.

A review of the medical literature and a recent convenience survey of Vermonters at risk of severe COVID-19 reveal several barriers to accessing Paxlovid:

- Lack of awareness among at-risk individuals that there is residual risk of severe COVID-19 despite vaccination;
- Clinician misconceptions that Paxlovid should not be prescribed for mild disease;
- Slow clinician office responses to at-risk patient calls about a new COVID-19 diagnosis;
- Rapid decompensation; and,
- Difficulty accessing Paxlovid at a convenient pharmacy

The Health Department strongly recommends all Vermonters at risk of severe illness contact their health care provider immediately, and certainly within the 5-day treatment window, if they test positive for SARS-CoV-2 regardless of disease severity. Due to a recent increase in nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) supply, it is readily available at many pharmacies throughout Vermont. The therapeutics section of the [healthcare professionals guidance](#) webpage has been updated with important information including how to review eligibility for and order Paxlovid. Health care professionals should develop systems to prescribe Paxlovid within 24 hours for all eligible patients who report a new diagnosis of COVID-19. Treatment is indicated immediately with a positive antigen test in an at-risk patient, particularly when any symptoms are present.

### **REQUESTED ACTIONS:**

- Use this new FDA guide to support clinical decision making: [screening checklist for paxlovid](#).
- Prescribe Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) to at-risk individuals who meet eligibility criteria, even if they have mild symptoms.
- Ensure there is a screening triage practice in your office so the appropriate patients get Paxlovid.

If you have any questions, please contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or [vthan@vermont.gov](mailto:vthan@vermont.gov).

**HAN Message Type Definitions**

*Health Alert:* Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

*Health Advisory:* Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.

*Health Update:* Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

*Info Service Message:* Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.