

April 25, 2022

## Got questions about Paxlovid?

Many patients have contacted our offices with questions about the antiviral medication Paxlovid ever since eligibility in Ontario was expanded.

Paxlovid was studied in high risk, unvaccinated patients and found to decrease the risk of severe disease and hospitalization by 89%.

It is less helpful and not recommended in lower risk, vaccinated patients. It also does not seem to alleviate symptoms of Covid infection.

Patients are at higher risk of severe disease and hospitalization if they are above the age of 70, have 2 or fewer Covid vaccinations or have health conditions that put them at a higher risk. These risks mean a conversation regarding suitability for Paxlovid is a good idea.

Ontario has a screening tool that can be used to help people decide if they are at higher risk: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-treatment-screener/>

Fully vaccinated people with at least 3 doses have a very low risk of severe disease - so getting vaccinated is still the best way to protect yourself.

Paxlovid has many serious drug interactions with commonly prescribed medications, herbal products and supplements such as St. John's wort. It is very important that you let your primary care provider know **everything** you are taking to ensure that the risk of drug toxicity and adverse effects are minimized while you are taking Paxlovid. If you are at high risk for severe Covid infection, it is a good idea to prepare this list in advance.

Because of the risk of serious drug interactions, Paxlovid cannot be prescribed to you in advance. Paxlovid should never be shared with a friend or family member as this can cause serious harm.

Paxlovid needs to be started within 5 days of having symptoms. In Ontario there is no charge for the medication.

Your primary care provider can help confirm whether you have Covid infection and whether you would benefit from Paxlovid treatment. If you are at high risk, it may be helpful to have some rapid antigen tests on hand. People who are eligible for Paxlovid are also now eligible for PCR testing. However, it is not absolutely necessary to confirm Covid infection before seeking treatment.

Below is an excellent link to a handout of frequently asked questions:

<https://www.ontariohealth.ca/sites/ontariohealth/files/2022-04/Paxlovid-PatientFactSheet.pdf>

If you feel you may be a candidate for Paxlovid, please reach out to your primary care provider as soon as you start experiencing Covid-like symptoms.

We hope you find this helpful.

Your Taddle Creek Family Team.