

Q

If I get sick with flu or COVID-19, what are my treatment options?

A

Antiviral medications may be an option to lessen the symptoms and shorten the time you are sick if you have flu or COVID-19. Starting antiviral treatment early can reduce the risk of some complications.



What to know about antivirals:



Antivirals are **prescription-only medications that are specific to the virus they treat**. Do not take them for other infections.

They work by **targeting the virus inside of your body** so it can't multiply.

They are not sold over the counter — you need a prescription.

Timely and important antiviral facts:



Antivirals work best if taken early, ideally as soon as possible after symptom onset, and within:

- **2 days** for flu
- **5–7 days** for COVID-19

Treatment can be especially important if you're at higher risk for severe illness, even if your symptoms are mild. **If you're at higher risk, contact your healthcare provider after symptoms begin.**

Am I at higher risk of getting very sick?

- Adults age 65+
- Pregnant and recently pregnant women
- Young children under 2
- People with certain health conditions, including weakened immune systems

If you don't have a healthcare provider and have tested positive for flu or COVID-19, contact your community health center or health department about antiviral treatments.

