

NS Health Nirmatrelvir/Ritonavir (Paxlovid™) Updates For Health Care Professionals

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) is authorized by Health Canada for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID in individuals at high risk of progressing to severe disease.

The recommended pathway to achieve the most timely nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) assessment is referral to the NS Health COVID-19 Non-Severe Treatment Team using the [Nova Scotia Health Report and Support form](#). The [form](#) can be filled out online at <https://c19hc.nshealth.ca/self-report> or by calling 1-833-797-7772 (option 2). Patients at high risk for developing severe disease may be prescribed nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) by a [designated prescriber](#) using the NS Health [referral criteria](#) and provided federally-procured stock that is of no cost to the patient.

As of March 31, 2024, the federal government will no longer provide a free supply of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) to the provinces and territories. This means that:

- pharmacies previously designated to receive the federal free supply will continue ordering and using this supply for patients with a prescription from a [designated prescriber](#) until expiry or depletion of the federal supply.
- all physicians and nurse practitioners will be able to prescribe nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™).
- all pharmacies will be able to purchase nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) through McKesson in late March 2024.

Patients with prescriptions from non-designated prescriber physicians and nurse practitioners who present to pharmacies to fill their prescription are responsible for payment. Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) is NOT currently a benefit for NS Pharmacare and other third-party coverage may vary as not all plans have completed benefit reviews. The anticipated list price is \$1288 per standard dose pack.

- These patients **should be advised** they can be assessed for eligibility to receive the federal supply at no cost. To be assessed, patients should be referred to the **NS Health COVID-19 Non-Severe Treatment Team** using the online [Nova Scotia Health Report and Support Form](#) or by calling 1-833-797-7772 (option 2).
- After completing the [Nova Scotia Health Report and Support Form](#), only patients who may benefit from antiviral treatment will receive a phone call within 48 hours for further assessment.

Evaluation Of Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) Appropriateness

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) for early and mild COVID does not benefit everyone. Duration and severity of symptoms, vaccination status, certain medical conditions or medications may make nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) inappropriate.

[Designated prescribers](#) complete comprehensive evaluations, informed consent discussions, and counsel patients prior to prescribing nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™). The evaluation includes:

- Identification of risk factors for developing severe disease
- Screening for drug interactions and adjustment of impacted medications
- Assessment of renal function and adjustment of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) when required
- Consulting patient's pharmacy and primary care provider and/or specialist(s) as required

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- Counselling patient about nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) efficacy, adverse effects, dose adjustments, drug interactions, changes required to their medications impacted by nirmatrelvir/ritonavir, manipulation instructions for patients unable to swallow tablets whole, and signs of worsening symptoms which necessitate seeking medical attention
- Referral of patients exhibiting signs of moderate to severe infection and patients at risk of or with persistent COVID infection
- Complete remdesivir assessments for those who may benefit from antiviral therapy and cannot receive nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™)

Community pharmacies receiving prescriptions from prescribers who are not a [designated prescriber](#), should ensure the above evaluation is completed prior to dispensing nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™).

Drug Interaction Resources

A comprehensive drug interaction assessment is essential prior to initiating treatment with nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™).

Ritonavir is a potent inhibitor of CYP3A4 and P-glycoprotein with a rapid onset of inhibition which persists after completion of therapy, and also affects other CYP isozymes. Concentrations of medications metabolized by CYP3A4 can be significantly elevated and for some medications this may be life threatening. Conversely, potent CYP3A4 inducers may reduce concentrations of nirmatrelvir and ritonavir, reducing effectiveness and contribute to the development of resistance.

In addition to general drug interaction databases, nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) specific resources should be consulted to aid in drug interaction management including:

- [Liverpool COVID-19 Drug Interaction Checker](#)
- [Ontario Nirmatrelvir/Ritonavir Prescribing and Drug Interaction Information](#)
 - Includes three resources that offer guidance on general drug interactions, direct oral anticoagulants, and oncology treatments

Additional Resources

The **COVID-19 Non-Severe Treatment Team** is available to assist health care professionals completing assessments and to provide support for nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid™) questions. The service will respond as soon as possible 7 days a week and may be contacted by phone: 1-833-714-2784 or e-mail: COVIDTreatment@nshealth.ca. The phone number and email are only intended to be used by health care professionals and should NOT be provided to the public.

- [Firstline Nova Scotia Health- Coronavirus Virus Disease COVID-19](#)
- [Nirmatrelvir/Ritonavir \(Paxlovid™\) Manipulation Instructions -for patients unable to swallow tablets whole](#)
- [Pfizer Shelf-Life Correction – June 14, 2023](#)
- [NS Health Non-Severe COVID-19 Designated Prescriber List](#)
- [Nova Scotia Health Report and Support](#)