



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 27, 2022

Biden Admin Launches First Federal Test-to-treat Site to Offer Pfizer's Experimental Antiviral; More to Come

The Biden administration announced it is launching the first federally run test-to-treat Covid site in Rhode Island and is planning to open such sites in New York City and Massachusetts in the coming weeks in order to curb the spread of the virus by treating people who have tested positive with Pfizer's experimental antiviral pills. Federal clinical personnel will also be deployed in Minnesota to help run state-operated test-to-treat sites.

According to the White House [announcement](#) posted Thursday, the country has been doing better in handling the pandemic:



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Because of the work the Biden Administration has done on vaccines, boosters, treatments, and more, COVID-19 deaths are down 90 percent from when the President took office — even as cases rise in parts of the country.

To combat this rise in cases, the administration is attempting to increase the use of Paxlovid, a Pfizer antiviral pill.

“One of the most effective treatments in our nation’s medicine cabinet is Paxlovid, an oral antiviral pill, which reduces the risk of hospitalization or death by about 90 percent,” said the White House.

According to the announcement, there are now more than 2,500 test-to-treat locations set up across the country at local pharmacies and community health centers — which is 300 more than a month ago.

Americans are taking more Paxlovid, too. During the past week, 182,000 prescriptions were filled, compared to 27,000 filled in the previous seven weeks. “We have also doubled the number of sites where Paxlovid is available nationally,” said the White House.

To build on that “success,” the Biden administration launched the first rest-to-treat Covid clinic in Providence, where “federal reimbursement will now allow individuals who test positive for COVID-19 at the clinic to immediately receive an assessment from a medical provider and get oral antiviral treatments — if prescribed — all in one convenient location that serves some of the state’s highest-risk and hardest-hit populations.”

Remarkably, [83 percent](#) of the population of Rhode Island is “fully vaccinated,” and 45 percent is boosted with a third dose.

But will the “highest-risk” Americans benefit from Paxlovid?

Paxlovid, much like the Covid vaccines currently available in the United States, is another experimental drug, and received an emergency use authorization (EUA) in December 2021. The pill is intended to be



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taken for the treatment of mild-to-moderate Covid cases in people 12 and older.

Numerous factors should be considered before using this drug.

First, according to the FDA fact sheet ([pdf](#)), Paxlovid isn't recommended for people with severe liver or kidney disease.

Second, Paxlovid interacts with a great number of other medicines. Given that most people who are at high risk of severe Covid are already sick, the chances are they use at least some of these other drugs.

The list of medications with which Paxlovid interacts with includes some anticoagulants, antidepressants, antifungals, numerous anti-HIV drugs, immunosuppressants, hormonal contraceptives, narcotic analgesics (fentanyl and methadone), systemic corticosteroids, Hepatitis C antivirals, antipsychotic drugs, some of the anti-infective, sedative, and anticonvulsant drugs, and even herbal supplements, among others. According to [drugs.com](#), a total of 623 drugs are known to interact with Paxlovid.

If people use any of these drugs, they should be extremely careful to add an experimental Paxlovid to the mix. It is worth keeping in mind that since the drug is administered under an EUA, its manufacturer bears no liability for possible adverse events.

The FDA also notes that there is no available human data on the use of Paxlovid during pregnancy to evaluate a risk of major birth defects, miscarriage, or adverse maternal or fetal outcomes.

Lastly, the cost of one course of Paxlovid reportedly reaches \$529. Notably, the experimental and costly drug has been dubbed "Pfizermectin" — a combination of the company's name and the drug ivermectin — by some observers. Pfizer describes its pill as a "potent protease inhibitor," which is exactly what ivermectin, a proven Covid early treatment, is, at a [fraction of the price](#) the Biden administration is paying Pfizer for Paxlovid. Ivermectin interacts with [82 medications](#).

According to [Popular Science](#), Paxlovid can make some drugs less effective, cause many drug levels to fluctuate, and sometimes cause serious or even life-threatening reactions.

"Before a patient takes Paxlovid, the patient, the pharmacist and the prescriber should review all of the patient's medications to identify and avoid clinically significant drug interactions," an infectious disease specialist at the Mayo Clinic, Abinash Virk, told the outlet.

Yet the Biden administration will be treating people who merely tested positive for Covid by administering Paxlovid on premises. Given that the PCR Covid tests can produce up to [90 percent](#) false-positive results, far too many Americans will be offered an experimental pill they don't even need.

On a separate note, it is worth mentioning that while Biden's announcement only mentioned "Covid cases" once, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is signaling an elevated concern with the developments. It [warned last week](#) that the number of "cases" (people who tested positive for Covid) approached 100,000 per day during the previous week. As a result, nearly 25 percent of Americans were urged to get back to Covid rituals such as mask wearing.

The officials also warned that if Congress does not approve additional funding — some \$10 billion — to buy more antivirals and vaccines, the country will see one million Covid cases in the fall and winter.



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