

# COVID-19 drugs: Are there any that work?

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**Question:** I've heard several drugs mentioned as possible treatments for COVID-19. What are they and how do they work?

**Answer:** Although there is no product approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), many medications are being tested.

One [investigational drug](#) called remdesivir has been authorized by the FDA for emergency use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Remdesivir may be prescribed for people who are hospitalized with severe COVID-19. It's given through a needle in the skin (intravenously).

Researchers are studying other potential treatments for COVID-19, including:

**Antiviral drugs.** In addition to remdesivir, other [antiviral drugs](#) being tested include favipiravir and merimepodib. Studies have found that lopinavir and ritonavir aren't effective.

**Dexamethasone.** The corticosteroid dexamethasone is one type of anti-inflammatory drug being studied to treat or prevent organ

dysfunction and lung injury from inflammation. A recent study found it reduced deaths by about 30% for people on ventilators and by about 20% for people who needed supplemental oxygen. The U.S. National Institutes of Health has recommended this [drug](#) for people hospitalized with COVID-19 who are on mechanical ventilators or need supplemental oxygen. Other corticosteroids, such as prednisone, methylprednisolone or hydrocortisone, may be used if dexamethasone isn't available. However, their effectiveness isn't yet known. Dexamethasone and other corticosteroids may be harmful if given for less severe COVID-19 infection.

**Anti-inflammatory therapy.** Researchers study many [anti-inflammatory drugs](#) to treat or prevent dysfunction of several organs and lung injury from infection-associated inflammation.

**Immune-based therapy.** Researchers are studying the use of a type of immune-based therapy called convalescent plasma. Convalescent plasma is blood donated by people who've recovered from COVID-19. It is used to treat people who are seriously ill with the disease.

**Drugs being studied that have uncertain effectiveness.** Researchers are studying amlodipine, ivermectin, losartan and famotidine. But it is not yet known how effective these drugs may be in treating or preventing COVID-19.

**Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine.** These malaria drugs were authorized for emergency use by the FDA during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the FDA withdrew that authorization when data analysis showed that the drugs are unlikely to be effective. They can also cause serious heart problems.

**Drugs to prevent COVID-19.** Researchers are studying drugs to prevent COVID-19 before and after exposure to the virus.

It's not known if any of these will prove to be

effective against COVID-19. It's critical to complete [medical studies](#) to determine whether any of these medications are effective against COVID-19.

Don't try these medications without a prescription and your health care provider's approval, even if you've heard that they may have promise. These drugs can have serious side effects. They're reserved for people who are seriously ill and under a health care provider's care.

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