A range of anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibodies and antiviral medications have been provisionally approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

These medications are for prophylaxis or for the treatment of patients in the early phase of infection with COVID-19 who are at risk of progression to severe disease. This guidance outlines the use of these medications in NSW.

Methodology

The National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce (NCCET) Guidelines specify recommendations for the use of anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibodies and antivirals in adults, and children and adolescents (aged over 12 years) in Australia based on available evidence. This guidance is based on these recommendations and the evidence checks undertaken by the NSW Critical Intelligence Unit (CIU).

The available evidence was considered by an expert group of NSW clinicians to inform the development of this guidance. Emerging medications are also being monitored by the CIU and will be included in this document, as required. This document should be read in conjunction with drug guidance developed by the Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC).

Updates – 12 August 2022

Minor updates to this version only to reflect changes in access pathways.

Who can be treated?

Clinical criteria and risk factors

The medications covered in this model of care are:

- casirivimab and imdevimab
- molnupiravir
- nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir
- remdesivir
- sotrovimab
- tixagevimab and cilgavimab
The drug guidelines for these medications are available on the [CEC website](http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au).

Generally, these drugs are for use early in the course of the disease before significant symptoms or severe disease have developed, and within a window of 5 to 7 days from the onset of infection (preferably as early as possible). These agents prevent the replication and spread of the virus and are likely to work best soon after infection has occurred. This limits the spread of the virus beyond the respiratory tract and before a severe systemic immune response has been initiated. The guidance outlined in this document is for the use of a single medication for this indication.

**Note:** Tixagevimab plus cilgavimab can be used for pre-exposure prophylaxis and casirivimab plus imdevimab for post-exposure prophylaxis.

Currently only some of these medications are approved for children and adolescents aged 12 to 17 years who weigh >40kg.

Only specific patient groups are expected to benefit from, and hence be eligible for, these medicines. They are not an alternative to COVID-19 vaccination, which remains the best way to protect vulnerable populations from severe outcomes of COVID-19 infection.

Although the indications for these medications are similar, they are not identical. As such, NCCET eligibility criteria recommendations and individual drug guidelines should be reviewed, particularly with respect to the COVID-19 variants likely to be present.

Considerations for all medications are outlined in Table 1.

**Vaccination**

Routine use of these medications is not encouraged in patients who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations, unless a suboptimal response is predicted (e.g. severe immunosuppression from a medical condition or medication) or if the patient has multiple co-morbidities that increase their risk of disease progression.5

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) specifies the interval for vaccination. Vaccination can take up to 14 days to be effective.5

ATAGI does not recommend a minimum time frame to defer vaccination due to monoclonal antibody medicine or antiviral administration. However, it is recommended to follow guidance to defer vaccination for 3 months following infection.6

**Adverse events**

All adverse events should be reported to the TGA at [www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems](http://www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems). NSW Health staff must also report adverse events via the local incident management system (IIMS+).

**Criteria for prescription in NSW**

The criteria for prescribing monoclonal antibody treatments and antiviral medicines in NSW align to the NCCET recommendations (for TGA-approved indications) or PBS criteria, with some additions, as summarised in Table 1.

Where Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status appears as a risk factor, an age of 30 years or older should be applied.

Wherever possible, prescribing of the oral antivirals (molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir) must occur via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. However, in the following circumstances dispensing by a NSW Health Pharmacy Department may continue to occur:

- where the patient is an inpatient in an NSW health facility
- for patients presenting to emergency departments
- for patients prescribed tixagevimab plus cilgavimab for pre-exposure prophylaxis by their community-based GP or medical specialist (only if the patient does not have an existing link to a NSW Health facility or private hospital)
- for virtual care or COVID Care in the Community patients
- for patients identified by general practitioners or community-based medical specialists who meet the criteria outlined by the NCCET but are ineligible for PBS supply.

Evidence indicates that there is reduced efficacy of sotrovimab and casirivimab plus imdevimab against Omicron (including all subvariants).2,3,7,8

To support ongoing use of this document all medications within scope have been retained.
However, clinicians and services should note:

- the information provided regarding efficacy against current variants
- the most current decision advice in Figure 1
- the considerations outlined in Table 1
- updated recommendations from the NCCET.

The NCCET has also developed a risk classification tool for adults with mild COVID-19 that assists clinicians to select the medication likely to be the most effective.³

**Use of available medications for off-label indications or in combination**

The NCCET has made:

- a conditional recommendation regarding the use of tixagevimab plus cilgavimab as treatment for non-hospitalised patients with mild to moderate disease¹⁰
- a consensus recommendation regarding the use of nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir in children and adolescents aged 12 years and over and weighing at least 40 kg who do not require oxygen and who are at high risk of deterioration.¹¹

**These medicines are not currently approved by the TGA for these indications and therefore, use is off-label.**

There is no supporting evidence for combination therapy (antivirals plus monoclonal antibodies). The NCCET recommends that the use of two or more monoclonal antibodies should be avoided except where co-formulated.¹⁰

Where a clinician believes that a patient may benefit from the use of an available medication for an off-label indication or combination therapy (antivirals plus monoclonal antibodies), approval must be sought from the local Drug and Therapeutics Committee (via the Individual Patient Use process, see PD2016_033) prior to commencing therapy. An independent peer-review process is also encouraged. Primary care practitioners should flag the patient through their local LHD escalation pathways.
Table 1. Overview of medications

The medications listed for treatment are for administration in the first 5 -7 days of symptom onset, for patients who do not require oxygen and are at high risk of disease progression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>NSW criteria for administration</th>
<th>Variant considerations</th>
<th>Route of administration</th>
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</table>
| Sotrovimab (Xevudy)                     | Treatment                 | As per NCCET recommendations (with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age threshold of 30 years) for: Adults⁷  
  Pregnant women in their 2nd or 3rd trimester¹⁹  
  Children and adolescents 12 years or older and weighing at least 40 kg²⁰ | Reduced effectiveness against Omicron BA.2, BA.4 and BA.5 | Intravenous infusion |
| Casirivimab plus imdevimab (Ronapreve)  | Treatment                 | Post-exposure prophylaxis                                                                        | Reduced effectiveness against Omicron BA.1, BA.2, BA.4 and BA.5 | Intravenous infusion or subcutaneous injection |
| Molnupiravir (Lagevrio)                 | Treatment                 | As per PBS criteria and NCCET recommendations for adults (with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age threshold of 30 years)¹³,¹⁴  
  For expanded eligibility criteria as at 11 July 2022, see Lagevrio - Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme Factsheet | Oral                                                                                  |                         |
| Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (Paxlovid)  | Treatment                 | As per PBS criteria and NCCET recommendations for adults (with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age threshold of 30 years)¹⁵,¹⁶  
  For expanded eligibility criteria as at 11 July 2022, see Paxlovid - Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme Factsheet | Oral                                                                                  |                         |
| Tixagevimab plus cilgavimab (Evusheld)  | Pre-exposure prophylaxis  | As per TGA approved product information for adults, pregnant women, and children and adolescents 12 years or older and weighing at least 40 kg (pre-exposure prophylaxis)¹⁷ | Intramuscular injection                                                               |                         |
| Remdesivir (Veklury)                    | Treatment (early treatment only, within 7 days of symptom onset) | As per NCCET recommendations (with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age threshold of 30 years)⁸ for:  
  Adults⁸  
  Pregnant or breastfeeding women⁵  
  Children and adolescents 12 years or older and weighing at least 40 kg²⁴ | For patients identified by general practitioners or community-based medical specialists that meet the criteria outlined by the NCCET but are ineligible for PBS supply. (NCCET requires only one risk factor to trigger treatment and has a lower age threshold than the PBS.) | Intravenous infusion |

* Wherever possible, prescribing of the oral antivirals (molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir) must occur via the PBS. However, in the following circumstances dispensing by a NSW Health Pharmacy Department may continue to occur:
  - where the patient is an inpatient in an NSW health facility
  - for patients presenting to Emergency Departments
  - for patients prescribed tixagevimab plus cilgavimab for pre-exposure prophylaxis by their community-based GP or medical specialist (only if the patient does not have an existing link to a NSW Health facility or private hospital)
  - for virtual care or COVID Care in the Community patients

† Where uncertainty exists regarding vaccine response in an individual, anti-SARS-CoV-2 spike antibody testing may be useful.

§ Between days 5 to 7 following symptom onset remdesivir may be suitable for high-risk patients. Where GPs believe this is indicated, this should be escalated to the local LHD lead via the HealthPathways escalation line as prescription cannot occur through the PBS.
Figure 1. Decision pathway: suitability for sotrovimab, casirivimab plus imdevimab, molnupiravir, nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir and remdesivir

- **Patient meets eligibility criteria**

- **Is the patient a child or adolescent aged > 12 years and weighing >40 kg?**
  - **YES**: Consider remdesivir OR monoclonal antibody administration (noting reduced efficacy against Omicron)
  - **NO**

- **Is the patient pregnant?**
  - **YES**: Consider remdesivir OR monoclonal antibody administration (noting reduced efficacy against Omicron)
  - **NO**

- **Is the patient of childbearing potential or sexually active with a partner of childbearing potential and unable to effectively use suitable contraception?**
  - **YES**
    - Neither oral antiviral agent is recommended in pregnancy and molnupiravir has potential teratogenic effects
    - Oral antivirals must only be used in patients of childbearing potential or sexually active with a partner of childbearing potential in conjunction with suitable contraception
  - **NO**

- **Does the patient have pre-existing severe liver disease (Child Pugh class C)?**
  - **YES**
    - Consider molnupiravir
  - **NO**

- **Does the patient have pre-existing renal disease?**
  - **YES**
    - eGFR <30mL/min
      - Consider molnupiravir
    - eGFR 30 – 60mL/min
      - Consider a dose reduction of nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir OR molnupiravir
  - **NO**

- **Will the patient have difficulty accessing an infusion clinic?**
  - **YES**
    - Consider nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (unless drug interactions or renal disease (eGFR <30mL/min) preclude its use)
      - OR
    - Molnupiravir (noting nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir is preferred where suitable)
  - **NO**

**Patient is suitable for either monoclonal antibody infusion or antiviral agents**

Efficacy of monoclonal antibodies against Omicron should inform decision
References


Document information

<table>
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<th>Version number</th>
<th>14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original publication date</td>
<td>31 August 2021</td>
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| Consultation | Ministry of Health  
Clinical Excellence Commission  
This document has been informed by the National Clinical Evidence Taskforce guidance. |
| Endorsed by | Nigel Lyons |
| Review date | 12 August 2022 |
| Reviewed by | Clinical working group (as above) |
| For use by | Health services and clinicians assessing patients suitable for sotrovimab infusion and its administration:  
COVID-19 response teams  
Community services and Hospital in the Home  
Respiratory, infectious diseases, immunology  
Drug and therapeutics committees  
Cancer care and blood and marrow transplant services |

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