Medicines for COVID-19

Indication: COVID-19  
ICD11 code: RA01

Medicine type: Chemical agent

List type: Core

Additional notes: WHO recommends that effective and safe therapeutics for prevention and treatment of COVID-19 should be considered as essential medicines in the context of the public health emergency. WHO recommendations are revised and updated regularly in WHO living guidelines for therapeutics for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19. Selection of essential therapeutics for COVID-19 at the national level should be informed by recommendations in these guidelines, and consideration of the latest evidence, epidemiology and national priorities. The latest WHO Therapeutics and COVID-19: living guideline is available online at: https://app.magicapp.org/#/guideline/nBkO1E The latest WHO Drugs to prevent COVID-19: living guideline is available online at: https://app.magicapp.org/#/guideline/L6RxYL

Formulations: Refer to WHO living guidelines

EML status history: First added in 2023 (TRS 1049)

Sex: All

Age: Also recommended for children

Therapeutic alternatives: The recommendation is for this specific medicine

Patent information: Read more about patents.

Wikipedia: Medicines for COVID-19

Summary of evidence and Expert Committee recommendations

Taking account of the global recognition of the need for effective therapeutics to prevent and treat COVID-19, as well as the need to ensure adequate and affordable access globally to these treatments, the Expert Committee recommended that effective and safe therapeutics for COVID-19 should be considered as essential medicines and should therefore be prioritized by countries for national selection and procurement. However, the Committee also recognized the continued rapid evolution of the evidence base for COVID-19 therapeutics, which contrasts with the 2-year update cycle of the Model Lists. Furthermore, the evolution of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, combined with changing population immunity may influence disease severity and thus have an impact on the relative and absolute benefits associated with COVID-19 therapeutics. The Committee considered that in the context of public health emergencies, there is a risk in listing medicines on the WHO Model Lists that later must be removed because they are no longer relevant for the reasons outlined above, a scenario that ideally should be avoided. The Committee recommended that countries should refer to WHO and national guidelines as tools to orient prioritization of medicines during public health emergencies. The Expert Committee recommended a new section be added to the EML and EMLc for COVID-19 therapeutics, but that specific, individual medicines should not be listed at this time. Rather, the Committee recommended that this section of the Model Lists should direct national decision makers to the WHO living guidelines for COVID-19 therapeutics, noting that these are being revised and updated regularly. Importantly, these living guidelines also include recommendations for use of other medicines already included on the Model Lists (e.g. dexamethasone, oxygen), as well as recommendations against the use of medicines that are included on the Model Lists for other indications (e.g. hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir-ritonavir).