



News Release

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New telehealth option launched to expand COVID-19 treatment access

OLYMPIA – To increase access to potentially life-saving medication to treat COVID-19, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and its partners have launched a new telehealth option for patients. The new option expands the Federal government’s [Test to Treat initiative](#) and gives people at risk of severe disease another way to quickly access free treatment for COVID-19.

Until now, telehealth for COVID-19 has only been available to insured patients who receive care through a health care provider that offers telehealth visits. This new program makes telehealth consultations for COVID-19 available to everyone, regardless of insurance status, with no out-of-pocket costs.

“At DOH, we value equity and innovation, and have embraced those values throughout our COVID-19 response,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health. “Ensuring that we can equitably connect communities with therapeutics is pivotal so that we can continue our mission of reducing unnecessary death from this disease.”

DOH encourages people who test positive for COVID-19 to discuss treatment options with their primary health care provider. In situations where this might not be possible, free telehealth consultations are another option that can make it even easier to access treatments for COVID-19. People who test positive for COVID-19, including with a self-test, can consult with a health care provider using a smartphone or computer with a high-speed internet connection.

If appropriate, they can receive a free prescription for pick-up at the nearest pharmacy that has the oral antivirals or have their medication delivered. More than 1,000 sites are available across the state. This telehealth service is currently provided by DOH in collaboration with partners, including Birds Eye Medical and Color Health.

There are two options to set up a telehealth appointment – either by [visiting DOH’s new telehealth webpage](#) or by calling the DOH COVID-19 call center. Those interested in signing up virtually can complete a brief intake form on [DOH’s new telehealth webpage](#). If the information provided indicates treatment may be appropriate, the patient will be connected virtually with a health care provider for a consultation. Telehealth providers are available every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Those interested can arrange an appointment by phone by calling the DOH COVID-19 call center at 1-800-525-0127 and press #. The call center is available to arrange telehealth consultations from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Mondays, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays through Sundays and state holidays.

Telehealth appointments are currently available in 240 languages through translation services. People interested in receiving a telehealth appointment in a language other than English should arrange an appointment through the DOH COVID-19 call center.

One of the most effective COVID-19 treatments is [Paxlovid](#), an [oral antiviral](#) drug that reduces the risk of hospitalization by approximately 90 percent. Oral antivirals like Paxlovid are only available by prescription and must be started within five days of first symptoms to prevent severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19.

“Our goal is for all eligible patients at high risk for severe disease to have equitable access to life-saving COVID-19 treatments,” said Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer. “We’re excited to make this service free to everyone with no out of pocket costs so that even those without insurance will be able to access antiviral medications. And by offering telehealth consultations in multiple languages, the program increases access for non-English speakers as well.”

Oral antivirals are an important treatment for people who are at high risk of hospitalization. People at high risk include those 65 years old or older, obese, pregnant, have chronic medical conditions such as heart, lung, or kidney disease, or people who are taking immunosuppressant treatments. Children as young as 12 years old with certain chronic conditions and who weigh at least 88 pounds, may also be eligible for antiviral treatment. Learn more about what may place people at [high risk for COVID-19](#).

Visit the Washington State Department of Health’s website for [more information on COVID-19 treatments](#) and [information for health care providers](#).

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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