



# Coronavirus Update

Jan. 7, 2022

## PBM update on oral COVID-19 treatments

On Dec. 22, 2021, Pfizer received an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA for its oral antiviral therapy for COVID-19, Paxlovid. On Dec. 23, 2021, Merck received an EUA from the FDA for its oral antiviral therapy for COVID-19, molnupiravir.

The U.S. government has purchased all of the initial supply of both products that is expected to be produced throughout calendar year 2022, and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) will allocate the antiviral therapies to the states for distribution, typically through state and local health departments. During the time that the HHS-purchased supply of these medications remains available, the U.S. government will cover the ingredient cost of Paxlovid and molnupiravir. However, as with vaccines, pharmacy benefit plan sponsors will cover the dispensing fee associated with these prescriptions when processed through the pharmacy benefit plan.

### Important notes

- Not every pharmacy will have access to Paxlovid and molnupiravir, at least initially. As with the initial vaccine rollout, supplies and locations will be limited. More information surrounding specific pharmacy locations having access to these medications will be provided as it becomes available.
- The U.S. government has created a website to identify locations where Paxlovid and molnupiravir can be obtained. The site can be found [here](#). Medication availability is expected to change rapidly and dynamically, so availability ought to be confirmed at the time of need.
- The dispensing fee for these claims will differ by PBM.
- These higher than contracted dispensing fees will be more than the current contracted dispensing fees and are justified on the basis of the enhanced level of documentation and effort associated with dispensing these medications. These enhanced efforts will include:
  - When the prescription is received from the prescriber, the pharmacist must verify eligibility before dispensing. This includes the pharmacist documenting the patient's COVID-19 symptoms and the onset time of those symptoms.
  - The pharmacist must obtain and file a copy of the positive COVID-19 test.
  - The pharmacist must obtain and review the kidney function of the patient and confirm that no kidney function impairment exists. If kidney function impairment is identified, the pharmacist must, in conjunction with the prescriber, reduce the dose and quantity of medication dispensed.

- The assessment of pregnancy status must be completed by the prescriber, but the dispensing pharmacist must confirm the test’s negative status.
  - Certain PBMs have indicated that they will assess a “program fee” in addition to the enhanced pharmacy dispensing fee for Paxlovid and molnupiravir claims only.
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