

Current major event

Therapeutics & COVID-19:

Latest developments

There has been an increase in the number of evidence-based therapeutics for COVID-19 in recent months. Many new treatment regimens are now recommended, based on reviews of clinical trials including evidence on effectiveness against Omicron variants.

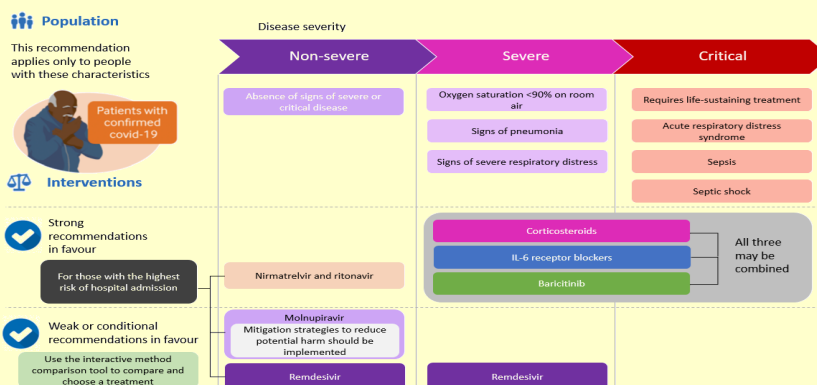
Editorial note

The latest new medications that are proven effective and recommended in treating patients with COVID-19 include antiviral medications and biological medical products. Antiviral drugs directly target specific viruses. However, three antiviral medications (Molnupiravir, Remdesivir, and Nirmatrelvir-Ritonavir) have been proven effective in certain patients primarily with non-severe COVID-19 disease.

Biological, medical products, or 'biologics' for short, are molecules isolated from natural sources, and these drugs interact in particular ways with targets in the body. Biologics are more commonly used for diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. One biologic (Baricitinib) has been proven effective in certain patients with severe or critical COVID-19 disease. This treatment may be administered in combination with both corticosteroids, and Interleukin-6 or IL-6 receptor blockers which are both recommended for patients with severe or critical COVID-19.

The therapeutics that have previously been effective and are recommended, include medications to **suppress the immune system's over-reaction**. Systemic corticosteroids can be used in injection or pill form in patients with severe and critical COVID-19. IL-6 receptor blockers (Tocilizumab and Sarilumab) also act to suppress over-reaction and are used for severe or critically ill patients with COVID-19.

The infographic illustrates three disease severity groups and the recommended therapeutics to consider.



WHO Therapeutics and COVID-19: Living guideline, 13 January 2023, page 12.

Links to WHO living guidance for therapeutics and clinical management of COVID-19

- Living guidance Therapeutics and COVID-19
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-therapeutics-2023.1>
- Living guidance Clinical management of COVID-19
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-clinical-2023.1>

There are medications WHO recommends **not to use** in patients with COVID-19, and the latest recommendations have added neutralizing monoclonal antibodies to this list. There is a strong recommendation against using Casirivimab-Imdevimab in patients with COVID-19 and Sotrovimab in patients with non-severe COVID-19 based on new evidence of the reduction of its effectiveness against circulating Omicron variants.

WHO publishes a living guideline, on therapeutics and clinical management of COVID-19, which contains the most up-to-date recommendations.

Guidelines regarding the use of drugs to prevent (rather than treat) COVID-19 are included in a separate document, *Drugs to prevent COVID-19*. Rapid adaptation and implementation of WHO-recommended therapeutics into COVID-19 clinical pathways are essential at national and local levels to impact and improve patient outcomes.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

Current public health events of concern
[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2023

Afghanistan	[209 776 (7881), 3.8%]
Bahrain	[696 614 (1536), 0.2%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[515 852 (24 819), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 579 071 (145 054) 1.9%]
Iraq	[2 465 545 (25 375), 1%]
Jordan	[1 746 997 (14 122), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[664 772 (2570), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 233 647 (10 837), 0.9%]
Libya	[507 206 (6437), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 272 585 (16 296), 1.3%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[703 228 (5708), 0.8%]
Oman	[399 449 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 578 258 (30 645), 1.9%]
Qatar	[495 856 (688), 0.1%]
Saudi Arabia	[831 311 (9624) 1.2%]
Somalia	[27 334 (1361), 5%]
Sudan	[63 899 (5026), 7.9%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[57 423 (3163), 5.5%]
Tunisia	[1 151 333 (29 345), 2.5%]
United Arab Emirates	[1 054 873 (2349), 0.2%]
Yemen	[11 945 (2159), 18.1%]