

## 5 Things to Know About Treating Patients for COVID

Hospitalizations of patients with COVID are relatively low when compared with this same time last year, but they have been [ticking upward](#) since the arrival of fall. We can keep more people out of the hospital and from dying by educating our patients about [treatment options](#) for people at increased risk for severe COVID illness.

Here are 5 things to keep in mind about treating patients for COVID:

1. Public health agencies continue to advise physicians to treat patients for COVID based on [risk of complications or poor outcomes](#) rather than on symptom severity.
2. Priority patients for treatment are those 50 and older (especially those over 65) and those with underlying conditions that put them at increased risk for COVID complications.
3. There are contraindications for some of these patients, especially those being treated for heart disease and those with chronic liver disease. So, you may not be able to offer treatment for COVID to all your at-risk patients.
4. Treatment for high-risk patients who are treatment-eligible must begin within 5 to 7 days of symptom onset, depending on the treatment.
5. Even high-risk patients who are only having mild symptoms should be treated to reduce their chances of severe illness, hospitalization, or death.

### Effectiveness of treatments against Omicron subvariants

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has [said](#) that currently authorized or approved treatments for COVID are expected to retain activity against BQ.1 and BQ.1.1, the Omicron subvariants responsible for most new infections in the United States. That agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are monitoring data and will issue alerts and recommendations as needed to help physicians provide their patients the best and most effective treatment possible.

### Vaccination remains the best protection

We may be seeing fewer COVID cases than we did this same time last year, but RSV and flu cases have increased dramatically. The best advice we can still give our patients is to stay up to date on vaccines that can help protect them—that includes the updated bivalent COVID vaccine that's available now.

### Free Resources to Help You Treat COVID Patients

We've developed a range of print and digital materials designed to help educate your patients about who is at increased risk for severe illness from COVID, the availability of COVID treatments, and the importance of early treatment. [Access all the free materials here.](#)

