

COVID-19 Surge Readiness:



Best Practices for Skilled Nursing Facilities

Saving lives and avoiding hospitalizations

Lives are being saved (and hospitalizations avoided) with timely COVID-19 treatments. Treatments are safe and effective, even with changing variants. Treatments can keep your residents and staff from developing severe disease and may help them test negative sooner. Preparing before a case will help residents get treated faster.

Share these documents with your residents' providers:

- CDPH [AFL COVID-19 Treatment Resources for SNFs](#) (9/12/22) and
- CDPH [CAHAN Health Advisory: Reminder to Lower Barriers to Prescribing COVID-19 Therapeutics to Mitigate Impact of COVID-19](#) (12/2/22).

These notices remind providers that ALL SNF residents are considered at higher risk for severe COVID-19 and the decision to not prescribe COVID-19 treatment should be reserved for situations in which the risk of prescribing clearly outweighs the benefits of treatment in preventing hospitalization, death, and the potential for reduced risk of long COVID.

Surge Preparedness Tips: Baseline strategies

- Masking
- Ensure staff and residents are up-to-date with vaccinations, including their flu and bivalent COVID-19 booster
- Isolating and cohorting ill patients
- Testing anyone with symptoms
- Preparing for increasing use of COVID-19 treatments:
 1. Reach out to your residents' providers
 2. Check in with your pharmacy
 3. Plan workflows
 4. Educate your staff
 5. Inform patients/families of treatment availability

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) COVID-19 Therapeutics Task Force wants to support you in getting ready for potential COVID-19 surges in your facility. CDPH understands that facilities do not control the actions and decision of individual providers. However, you can facilitate treatments for your residents and staff with preparedness education, awareness, and getting the right workflows into place. The CDPH Therapeutics Task Force is available to assist you with developing best practices and education for your situation.

The following checklist can help you prepare for and respond to COVID-19 in your facility.

Email: COVIDRxProviders@cdph.ca.gov



Outreach to providers caring for your residents:

- Encourage them to write orders for testing symptomatic residents (if testing order not provided by medical director) and create notes in each resident's chart for which treatment they should receive if they test positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms.
- Encourage providers to specify patients' renal and hepatic function (whether normal or impaired) to minimize barriers to prescribing COVID-19 treatment if/when the patient needs it.

Pharmacy planning:

- Confirm supply of COVID-19 therapeutic agents with long term care pharmacy supplier or in-house pharmacy.
- Discuss consultative service availability and how to streamline drug-drug interaction analysis/treatment option recommendations.
 - How can consultative pharmacist support providers with prescribing? Does your pharmacy have pharmacists who can prescribe Paxlovid if a provider is difficult to reach?
 - Nurse may reach out to pharmacy for recommendations while also simultaneously messaging provider about positive test.

Workflows:

- Testing: Accelerate workflow by requesting orders for performing rapid COVID-19 and flu tests on symptomatic residents. Reach out to providers for treatment plan for positive results from rapid test (without waiting for send-out PCR confirmation). If rapid testing is not possible, request orders for NAAT/PCR and reach out to providers for presumptive plan in the event the result is positive.
- Provider Communication: Identify a point person (or two) for communicating with providers about COVID-19 positive residents.
 - Create a script or checklist for staff to follow and use for communication with provider.
 - Utilize infection preventionist as point of contact if accessible.
 - Maintain awareness of renal and hepatic function review and DDI process.
 - Use LTC pharmacy for consultation regarding DDIs, simultaneous to outreach to provider.
 - ASK provider for prescription: "Which COVID-19 treatment do you want for this patient."
 - Plan for what role the medical director will play for COVID-19 positive, symptomatic patients if no timely response received from a provider.
- Staffing: Identify staffing plan if infusions (remdesivir) ordered. Some SNFs have adequate staffing to accommodate in regular schedule, others have had nurses do infusions on overtime before or after regular shift.



Educate Nursing & Ancillary Staff About Therapeutic Options:

Overview:

- Vaccines + treatments = more healthy residents and staff.
- Treating symptomatic COVID-19 among SNF residents is the new normal.
- Team approach encouraged: “Let’s keep our residents out of the hospital!”

Fast facts:

- Treatments are safe and effective in the elderly.
- Oral and IV options available.
- “Need for speed”** (oral antivirals must be started within 5 days from symptom onset; IV within 7 days).
- Options exist for individuals who are nutritionally compromised/unable to tolerate oral meds.
- Antivirals have persistent activity against changing variants.

Identifying when treatments are needed:

- Treatments are for patients with symptoms, not just a positive test.
- Frequently check patients for possible signs to be aware of changes.
- Symptoms can be mild and non-specific.
 - Possible early signs of COVID-19 (and other influenza-like illnesses) include:
 - ▶ Behavior changes like being more unsettled, expressing new delusions, wandering more than normal, eating/drinking less than usual, appearing sleepy.
 - ▶ Physical symptoms like headache, warmer than usual or chills, hoarse voice/sore throat shortness of breathing, eye infections, runny nose, new/changed cough, nausea or vomiting, unexplained diarrhea.
 - Non-standard COVID symptoms common in older adults:
 - ▶ Delirium, falls, fatigue, lethargy, low blood pressure, painful swallowing, fainting, diarrhea, abdominal pain.

Resource for symptomatic staff:

- Staff can access [free treatments for themselves \(covid19.ca.gov/treatment\)](https://covid19.ca.gov/treatment): **“Treat yourself!”**

Sample Protocol:

[SNF Protocol for Oral Antivirals](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/SNFPRtocolforOralAntivirals.pdf)
(publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/SNFPRtocolforOralAntivirals.pdf)

