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The World Health Organization(WHO) said that it "strongly recommended" Pfizer's Covid-19 antiviral pill Paxlovid for patients with milder forms of the disease who were still at a high risk of hospitalisation.

Pfizer's oral antiviral drug (a combination of nirmatrelvir and ritonavir tablets) is strongly recommended for patients with non-severe COVID-19 who are at highest risk of developing severe disease and hospitalization, such as unvaccinated, older, or immunosuppressed patients.

WHO's recommendation is based on new data from two randomized controlled trials involving 3078 patients. The data show that the risk of hospitalization is reduced by 85% following this treatment. In a high-risk group (over 10% risk of hospitalization), that means 84 fewer hospitalizations per 1000 patients.

WHO has strongly recommends that Pfizer make its pricing and deals more transparent and that it enlarge the geographical scope of its licence with the Medicines Patent Pool so that more generic manufacturers may start to produce the medicine and make it available faster at affordable prices.

The WHO recommended [Paxlovid](#) over remdesivir, as well as over Merck's molnupiravir pill and monoclonal antibodies.

Patients must start taking their Paxlovid pills within five days of the onset of symptoms -- the course then lasts five days.

WHO has also updated its recommendation on remdesivir, another antiviral medicine.

Previously, WHO had suggested against its use in all COVID-19 patients regardless of disease severity, due to the totality of the evidence at that time showing little or no effect on mortality. Following publication of new data from a clinical trial looking at the outcome of admission to hospital, WHO has updated its recommendation. WHO now suggests the use of remdesivir in mild or moderate COVID-19 patients who are at high risk of hospitalization.

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