

Department of Health Distributes Drug to Help Treat COVID-19 Patients in Hospitals

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Health today distributed the investigational antiviral medication, remdesivir, to treat patients in the hospital with COVID-19. The federal government distributed the first shipment of 1,200 doses to the department on Tuesday, May 12, and this entire allotment has been shipped to Pennsylvania hospitals.

“The department is working to give our hospitals every opportunity to treat patients with COVID-19,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “It is important to note that there is limited information on the safety and effectiveness of using remdesivir to treat people in the hospital with COVID-19. However, it was shown in a clinical trial to shorten the recovery time in some people, which is why the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the emergency use of the medication for treatment.”

[Fifty-one hospitals](#) across Pennsylvania will be receiving the first shipment over the next few days. The hospitals that will receive the first shipments [were determined](#) based on the number of COVID-19 patients at the hospital over a recent seven-day period, and the severity of the illness of those patients, based on whether they are on a ventilator. The department will continue to work with our federal partners to acquire more doses of this medication to serve more patients across Pennsylvania.

Remdesivir is given to a patient through an IV once per day for up to 10 days, depending on how critically ill the patient is. According to the FDA, remdesivir may help decrease the amount of coronavirus in your body, which may help you get better faster.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Repeating shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

As of 12:00 a.m., May 12, there were 57,991 positive cases of COVID-19 statewide in 67 counties and 3,806 confirmed deaths. Most of the patients hospitalized are 65 or older, and most of the deaths have occurred in patients 65 and older. There have been no pediatric deaths to date.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out for a life-sustaining reason, please wear a mask.

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts