

# Influenza (Flu) Antivirals: A Key Tool for Treatment



**Influenza (flu) antivirals are a key tool to help manage flu—especially for those at high risk of serious complications. Prompt diagnosis, early treatment, and patient education are all essential for reducing the burden of flu.**

## What are Antivirals?

- Antivirals are prescription medications designed to treat viral—not bacterial—infections. They interfere with the ability of a virus to multiply or function.
- Flu antivirals can help lessen symptoms and shorten the illness duration, reducing the risk of serious complications including pneumonia and hospitalization
- Early treatment is critical—antivirals work best when started within 48 hours of symptom onset, but may still help if started later, especially in high-risk and hospitalized patients

## Educate Patients at High Risk for Flu-Related Complications

- Prompt antiviral treatment is recommended for:
  - **Adults age 65+**
  - **Children younger than age 5 years**
  - **Pregnant women**
  - **Individuals with chronic health conditions**
- Explain the importance of starting antivirals quickly, at the first sign of flu symptoms
- Remind patients that antivirals are not a substitute for annual flu vaccination, but are an important tool to help prevent serious complications
- Encourage patients to stay home when sick to prevent spreading flu to others

## Prescribe the Right Antiviral

- In the US, there are currently 4 FDA-approved antiviral medications to treat flu\*
- Selection depends on patient age, underlying conditions, and pregnancy status
- Influenza viruses are constantly changing, and some changes can make antiviral drugs less effective or ineffective against influenza viruses
- Although antiviral medications are used to treat various viral infections, only flu antivirals are effective for the treatment of influenza

## Flu Moves Fast—You Should Too

- **Early antiviral treatment can save lives and help reduce severe complications**
- **Antivirals are not a substitute for annual flu vaccination which is the best way to prevent serious flu infections**
- **Antivirals are safe and effective for treating flu, especially in high-risk patients**
- **The benefits of antiviral treatment far outweigh concerns of potential resistance, which in most cases does not have a significant clinical impact**

**Prompt testing and diagnosis are critical when prescribing flu antiviral medication.**

For high-risk patients, treatment may be started before laboratory confirmation.

To diagnose flu symptoms, remember the **FACTS**:



\*[www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/influenza-flu-antiviral-drugs-and-related-information#AntiviralMedications](http://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/influenza-flu-antiviral-drugs-and-related-information#AntiviralMedications)