

## **The following information is being provided to Nova Scotia pharmacists by Nova Scotia Health**

### **Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) Guidance and Direction for Patients**

A great deal of public interest has been generated by the approval of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid), the first oral antiviral agent available for COVID-19 in Canada. It is expected that your patients and the general public will have questions, concerns, and expectations that will require your guidance.

The supply of nirmatrelvir/ ritonavir (Paxlovid) is limited at this time, and as such it will be prioritized for individuals and populations expected to derive the greatest benefit from therapy. A team of designated prescribers are responsible for writing nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) prescriptions in Nova Scotia. It cannot be initiated by prescribers who have not been identified as designated prescribers. Supply of the medication is only available in designated pharmacies located across the province.

Eligibility criteria for nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) is publicly available ([click link](#)). Processes are in place to identify potentially eligible individuals for further assessment for nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid). If an individual feels they are a candidate for therapy, they can be encouraged to complete the COVID-19 Report and Support Screening Tool ([click link](#)) or to call 811 for assistance and further instruction.

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) is not appropriate for everyone, and people should be aware that filling out the screening form does not necessarily mean they need or should take nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid). Duration and severity of symptoms, vaccination status, certain medical conditions and organ dysfunction, or some concomitant medications may deem therapy inappropriate.

### **Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) Drug Interactions**

Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) has many significant drug-drug interactions, primarily attributable to the ritonavir component and its impact on hepatic cytochrome P450 enzymes. A critical step in a pharmacist's assessment of a nirmatrelvir/ ritonavir (Paxlovid) prescription is careful screening of drug interactions and, if necessary, intervening to manage these interactions. The assessment includes gathering a complete history of prescription medications, over-the-counter products, traditional medicines, natural health products, and vitamins an individual is taking (by mouth, injection, eye drops, inhalers, creams, and nasal sprays). Management strategies of identified interactions with ritonavir may involve temporarily withholding or dose-adjusting a concomitant medication, therapeutic substitution of a concomitant medication, or increased clinical and/or laboratory monitoring.

In addition to your pharmacy's software for drug interaction checking, the University of Liverpool COVID-19 Drug Interactions database ([click link](#)) is recommended as a resource for screening and managing interactions.

It is important to note that any medication change (e.g., initiating a new prescription or over-the-counter product) occurring during or shortly after a patient's five-day course of nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) also requires the same careful assessment and management of interactions by the pharmacist involved in the medication change. The patient should be educated to seek the advice of a pharmacist before making any changes to their prescription medications, over-the-counter products, traditional medicines, natural health products, and vitamins and to inform any healthcare professionals of their nirmatrelvir/ritonavir (Paxlovid) course at any medical encounter during this timeframe.

Tasha Ramsey, PharmD and Dr. Lisa Barrett,  
Co-Chairs, NS COVID-19 Therapeutics and Prophylactics Advisory Group