

COVID-19

Monoclonal Antibody Treatment for COVID-19

Public Health Factsheet

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Manitoba 

Have you had a positive test for COVID-19? Do you have symptoms? Has it been less than seven days since your symptoms started? You might meet the criteria for monoclonal antibody treatment. While treatment helps reduce serious outcomes caused by COVID-19, it is NOT a substitute for full vaccination.

What are monoclonal antibodies?

This treatment uses laboratory-made proteins, or antibodies, to give people with no prior antibodies to COVID-19 an initial immune response that may prevent serious illness. Antibodies are used by your immune system to fight off foreign substances. Monoclonal antibodies give your body temporary antibodies faster than your body can make them. The treatment may also help protect against severe COVID-19 illness in people with weakened immune systems who may not generate a strong response to the COVID-19 vaccines.

Monoclonal antibody treatment can only be given to you once. It is delivered intravenously (using a needle into your vein). The antibodies attach to the spike protein of the coronavirus, and keeps the virus from entering and infecting healthy cells within your body to prevent COVID-19 symptoms from getting worse. **This treatment is only effective in the very early phase of COVID-19 infection and must be started within 7 days of symptom onset.**

How effective is monoclonal antibody treatment?

When given in the early phase of COVID-19 infection, monoclonal antibody treatment has been shown to significantly prevent hospitalization or death in patients without prior COVID-19 antibodies.

Who can be considered for monoclonal antibody treatment?

The decision to prescribe treatment will be made by the treating clinician, based on eligibility criteria which includes a positive COVID-19 test, duration of symptoms, your age, vaccination status and health conditions. For more information on the eligibility criteria, visit <https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/treatment/index.html>.

How do I access therapy?

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, your symptoms began less than 5 to 7 days ago, and you meet the criteria on this web page <https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/treatment/index.html>, please call Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** to find out if you qualify to receive monoclonal antibodies. If you are eligible, you will be referred for treatment. If you have a health condition, you can also discuss with your health care provider whether COVID-19 treatment is right for you.

Once a referral is made, a prescribing clinician will review your situation including medical history, medications and when your symptoms started to determine if you qualify for treatment and if so, which type of treatment is appropriate for you.

Why is this being offered now?

Health Canada recently received interim approval for the use of monoclonal antibodies. These are intended for early treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 illness in unvaccinated patients who are at risk of severe COVID-19, who would require hospitalization because of age or one or more diseases, or medical conditions impacting their health. Health Canada has authorized the use of this treatment based on limited clinical testing in humans, and reviews of safety, efficacy, and quality. Monoclonal antibody treatment continues to be studied for its effectiveness and safety. Monoclonal antibody treatment is an additional way to help reduce the risk of hospitalization from COVID-19.

What are the current monoclonal antibody treatments being used?

- Sotrovimab: covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/sotrovimab-en.html

Other treatment options may be right for you and new treatments may become available. Please refer to the treatment page here manitoba.ca/covid19/treatment/index.html for updated information.

What should I expect?

Before your treatment, you'll meet with your doctor and nursing team to answer questions, and your temperature, blood pressure, heart rate and other vital signs will be checked. If you agree to the treatment, you will have a needle placed in your vein for intravenous administration. You'll get a 30 to 60 minute infusion of the medication through your vein and be monitored for another 60 minutes afterwards. After this, you'll go home and continue your isolation as you were instructed by public health. There are no further doses needed.

What are possible side effects?

Allergic reactions or reactions following the infusion may occur. This can occur with any treatment. Patients are monitored for reactions, which are rare, during and after the infusion. Symptoms may include fever, chills, nausea and vomiting, difficulty breathing, and rash.

You may experience new or worsening symptoms after the infusion, including fever, difficulty breathing, rapid or slow heart rate, weakness, or confusion. It is unknown if this is related to the treatment or from COVID-19 symptoms worsening.

The side effects of getting a medicine by infusion may include brief pain, bleeding, swelling and bruising of the skin, and possible infection at the infusion site.

Other side effects that are worrisome or interfere with your daily activities should be reported to your health care provider or if severe, call 911.

Who should NOT receive monoclonal antibody treatment?

You should not receive the treatment if you have had a serious allergic reaction to any of the ingredients. Talk to your health care provider if you:

- have allergies;
- have a serious illness;
- have worsening COVID-19 symptoms;
- have received other treatments for COVID-19;
- are receiving or planning to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

Monoclonal antibodies have not been extensively studied in pregnant or breastfeeding individuals. If you are pregnant, think you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breastfeeding, discuss the benefits and risks of treatment with your prescribing health care provider.

If I am treated with monoclonal antibodies, should I still get vaccinated?

Yes. Contracting and being treated for COVID-19 does not offer the same protection as vaccination and it is possible to become sick again with COVID-19. The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to be fully vaccinated.

If you receive monoclonal antibodies, you must wait to be vaccinated for 90 days after treatment because the antibodies in the treatment may also prevent your immune system from responding to the vaccine.

Find a vaccination clinic at gov.mb.ca/covid19/vaccine/clinics.html

What are the next steps after treatment?

Treatment does not shorten your isolation time. It is important you continue to follow the isolation requirements given to you at the time of your positive test.

For more information on isolation, visit: <https://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/updates/resources.html#collapse2> to view the Individuals with Symptoms and/or Waiting for COVID-19 Test Results fact sheet.

What should I do if my COVID-19 symptoms get worse?

Call Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** or **1-888-315-9257** or your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Call 911 immediately if you experience severe symptoms of COVID-19, such as:

- difficulty breathing
 - severe chest pain
 - feelings of confusion
 - loss of consciousness.
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