

CDC warns of Paxlovid “rebound” cases: Suggested talking points

- **Some people have reported recovering from COVID-19 after taking Paxlovid but testing positive again two to eight days later.**
 - Symptoms during rebound infection seem to be mild or nonexistent, but infected individuals are still at risk of spreading the virus to others.
 - It’s unclear why rebound cases are happening. One hypothesis is that Paxlovid [may not entirely eliminate the infection](#) within the five-day treatment period. The COVID-19 virus that remains in the body after treatment ends could start replicating and cause people to test positive again.
 - Pfizer says its studies show that about 2 percent of people who take Paxlovid experience COVID-19 rebound, but some health care professionals believe the rate is much higher.
- **Paxlovid remains a highly effective treatment for COVID-19 that prevents hospitalization and death.**
 - The CDC continues to recommend Paxlovid for people at high risk of developing severe illness.
 - To be prescribed Paxlovid, you must have a positive test, be considered high-risk, and start the regimen within five days of developing symptoms.
 - Use [this locator](#) to find a “test-to-treat” site where you can get tested and receive treatment in one sitting.
 - If you have health insurance and a primary care provider, you can make an appointment to get tested or share your positive test result and then obtain a prescription.
 - Telehealth options through platforms like [PlushCare](#) and [eMed](#) offer online visits to assess COVID-19 tests and symptoms and prescribe medications.
- **People who experience “Paxlovid rebound” should re-isolate for at least five days.**
 - If you experience a return of COVID-19 symptoms after taking Paxlovid, take a test and wear a mask. If the test comes back positive, follow the [CDC’s isolation guidance](#).
 - Although the CDC recommends isolating for five days, many people continue to be infectious after this period. The safest option is to [isolate until you receive a negative rapid test](#) or wear a mask if you have to leave isolation before then.
 - The CDC does not recommend retaking Paxlovid if you experience COVID-19 rebound.

CDC warns of Paxlovid “rebound” cases: Frequently asked questions

1. Why are rebound infections happening after taking Paxlovid?

More research is needed to determine the cause of these rebound cases, but one hypothesis is that Paxlovid [may not entirely eliminate the infection](#) within the five-day treatment period. If there is still some COVID-19 virus that remains in the body after treatment ends, those leftover viruses could start replicating and cause people to test positive again. Pfizer says its studies show that about 2 percent of people who take Paxlovid experience COVID-19 rebound, but some health care professionals believe the rate is much higher.

2. Is Paxlovid still effective?

Paxlovid remains an extremely effective treatment option despite these concerns. The drug is nearly 90 percent effective at preventing hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 among unvaccinated, high-risk individuals. The CDC has warned of the rebound phenomenon but makes clear that it continues to recommend Paxlovid for people at high risk of developing severe illness.

3. What should I do if I experience a “rebound” case?

According to CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, if people experience a return of COVID-19 symptoms after taking Paxlovid, “They should test. They should put their mask back on. And if their test is positive, restart the isolation protocol.” The agency does not recommend that people retake the five-day Paxlovid course if they experience COVID-19 rebound.

Per [CDC isolation guidance](#), people who receive a positive test should stay at home and isolate themselves from others for at least five days. Many people continue to be infectious after the five-day period, so the safest option is to [isolate until you receive a negative rapid test](#) or wear a mask if you have to leave isolation without a negative test.