

March 30, 2020

HVPA Talking Points – Medications and COVID-19

Is there a vaccine yet to prevent COVID-19?

- There are no FDA-approved vaccines to prevent COVID-19 or other coronaviruses.

Source: Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Do vaccines against pneumonia protect you against the new coronavirus?

- No. Vaccines against pneumonia, such as pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine, do not provide protection against the new coronavirus.
- The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine. Researchers are trying to develop a vaccine against COVID-19 but one is not anticipated for at least 6-months.
- Although these vaccines are not effective against COVID-19, vaccination against other respiratory illnesses is highly recommended to protect your health.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

Can regularly rinsing your nose with saline help prevent infection with the new coronavirus?

- No. There is no evidence that regularly rinsing the nose with saline has protected people from infection with the new coronavirus.
- There is some limited evidence that regularly rinsing nose with saline can help people recover more quickly from the common cold.
- However, regularly rinsing the nose has not been shown to prevent respiratory infections.

Source: WHO

Can eating garlic help prevent infection with the new coronavirus?

- Garlic is a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence from the current outbreak that eating garlic has protected people from the new coronavirus.

Source: WHO

Are antibiotics effective in preventing and treating the new coronavirus?

- No, antibiotics do not work against viruses, only bacteria.
- The new coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus and, therefore, antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment.
- However, if you are hospitalized for COVID-19 virus, you may receive antibiotics because bacterial co-infection is possible.

Source: WHO

Are there FDA-approved medications available to treat or prevent COVID-19?

- There are no FDA-approved therapeutics (drugs) to treat COVID-19 or other coronaviruses at present.
- FDA is working closely with pharma companies to speed development of COVID-19 treatments however there are none currently available that have demonstrated effectiveness for prevention or treatment outside some small numbers of case reports.

Source: FDA

I've heard that the drugs chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine are effective for treating COVID-19. Is this true?

- Hydroxychloroquine sulfate and chloroquine phosphate are oral prescription drugs approved to treat malaria and other diseases such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Although there are no currently FDA-approved treatments for COVID-19, both drugs have shown activity in laboratory studies against coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- There have not been any clinical trials showing that these drugs are effective for treating COVID-19 in humans.
- At present clinical management includes infection prevention and control measures and supportive care, including supplementary oxygen and mechanical ventilatory support when indicated.
- An array of drugs approved for other indications as well as several investigational drugs are being studied in several hundred clinical trials that are underway across the globe but none have yet demonstrated the ability to treat effectively patients with COVID-19 or prevent the infection.
- Some of these drugs have been approved recently by the FDA only for emergency use and are being administered to hospitalized patients with COVID-19 infections as there are no other known treatments.
- Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine can cause serious side-effects in some patients, including heart failure, fatal heart arrhythmias and eye damage.
- All medications should only be used under the supervision of a health care professional.

Sources: U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), FDA

Why can't my doctor prescribe these drugs for me just in case I get COVID-19?

- There is no evidence that chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine can prevent or effectively treat COVID-19.
- The supply of the drugs is being directed to patients using the drugs for FDA-approved uses including lupus and rheumatoid arthritis as well as patients hospitalized with COVID-19 without any other options for treatment.
- If health care providers stockpile medications or patients without a current need for the medications get prescriptions, people with lupus or rheumatoid arthritis will not have access to the medications to treat their conditions, which can also be life-threatening.
- These medications also have serious risks, including to the heart, eyes and other body organs. If used in the wrong patients, there is a risk of serious side effects or death.
- Additionally, many states including Michigan Department of Licensing, have notified prescribers that providing prescriptions for patients that do not have lupus or rheumatoid arthritis or those hospitalized for COVID-19 or in a clinical trial, can possibly lose their medical license.
- Pharmacists are confirming an appropriate diagnosis with prescribers now before dispensing the medication.
- In addition, patients should not attempt to obtain these chemicals from the internet as they most likely are not safe for use in humans and have resulting in deaths and hospitalizations.

Sources: CDC, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA)

Can I just get an infusion of blood from a patient who has recovered from COVID-19 so I don't get sick?

- One investigational treatment being explored for COVID-19 involves the use of plasma collected from recovered COVID-19 patients. It is possible that this plasma may contain antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) might be effective against the infection, however, there is no evidence currently that this works for COVID-19 and is considered investigational.
- Physicians must obtain special emergency permission from the FDA in order to treat a patient by this method and find a blood donation that has antibodies. This does not allow for the prevention of COVID-19.
- The FDA does not supply any blood donations.
- Many physicians and health systems are not administering this type of therapy due to the lack of clinical evidence and the difficulty determining if there are substantial antibodies in a donor's blood.

Source: FDA

I've read that it is dangerous to use ibuprofen if I have COVID-19. Is this true?

- FDA is aware of unsubstantiated news reports stating the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, could worsen coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
- At this time, FDA is not aware of scientific evidence connecting the use of NSAIDs, like ibuprofen, with worsening COVID-19 symptoms.
- However, all prescription NSAID labels warn that “the pharmacological activity of NSAIDs in reducing inflammation, and possibly fever, may diminish the utility of diagnostic signs in detecting infections.”
- For those who wish to use treatment options other than NSAIDs, there are multiple over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications approved for pain relief and fever reduction such as acetaminophen.
- FDA suggests patients should speak to their health care professional if they are concerned about taking NSAIDs and rely on these medications to treat chronic diseases.

Source: FDA, WHO