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Paxlovid reduces risk of Long COVID

WASHINGTON — Today, VA released a [study](#) showing the medication Paxlovid can reduce the risk of symptoms of “Long COVID,” which affects millions of people in the U.S. and around the world. In the interest of public health, the study, “[Nirmatrelvir and the risk of post-acute sequelae of COVID-19](#),” was released before peer-review on the pre-print server medRxiv.

The study, which included more than 56,000 Veterans with a positive SARS-CoV-2 test, showed that those given the oral antiviral medication in the first 5 days of a COVID-19 infection had a 25% decreased risk of developing 10 of 12 different Long COVID conditions studied — including heart disease, blood disorders, fatigue, liver disease, kidney disease, muscle pain, neurocognitive impairment and shortness of breath.

The decreased risk of long COVID associated with Paxlovid treatment exists regardless of whether it was a participant’s first infection or a reinfection and regardless of whether the participant was unvaccinated, vaccinated or boosted.

“Paxlovid reduces the risk of severe COVID-19 in the acute phase, and now, we have evidence that it can help reduce the risk of long COVID,” said **Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, chief of research and development at the VA St. Louis Health Care System and clinical epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis**, who led the study. “This treatment could be an important asset to address the serious issue of long COVID.”

“This groundbreaking study is going to improve the lives of Veterans and all Americans,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “VA’s researchers have conducted life-saving studies throughout the pandemic, and Dr. Al-Aly’s excellent work here is yet another example of VA leading the way.”

In December 2021, the FDA approved Paxlovid for COVID-positive patients at a high risk for severe COVID-19. Paxlovid is a combination of two medications — nirmatrelvir and ritonavir. Paxlovid has been shown to lower the risk of hospitalization and death COVID-19 in infected patients. Paxlovid has to be prescribed within five days of symptoms, and it is important for individuals to contact their health care providers if they test positive for COVID-19 to see if they would benefit from being prescribed lifesaving oral antiviral treatments.

Throughout the pandemic, VA has conducted groundbreaking research on COVID and Long COVID. More information about those efforts can be found [here](#).

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