

# News Brief

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## Merck Antiviral COVID-19 Pill Found to Cut Risk of Hospitalization, Death

On Friday, Oct. 1, 2021, drug manufacturer Merck and its partner Ridgeback Biotherapeutics announced an antiviral pill that could drastically reduce the severity of COVID-19 infections.

The drug, molnupiravir, was shown in clinical trials to reduce the risk of COVID-19 hospitalizations and death by around 50%. Merck said they will be seeking emergency use authorization (EUA) from the Food and Drug Administration as soon as possible.

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**“Antiviral treatments that can be taken at home to keep people with COVID-19 out of the hospital are critically needed.”**

**- Wendy Holman, Ridgeback Biotherapeutics CEO**

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Molnupiravir works by affecting how the COVID-19 disease replicates. It is an oral antiviral pill—not a vaccine. Soon after being diagnosed with COVID-19, patients would take a series of these pills, which have been shown to prevent the development of serious health complications.

Health experts say such antiviral treatments may be the next key step in overcoming the pandemic.

### **What's Next?**

It's unclear exactly when molnupiravir might enter the market for public use. Even if it's granted EUA, the drug might be limited initially to vulnerable populations.

However, health leaders expect the treatment may become more widespread in the near future. This is partially evidenced by the U.S. government having already placed over a million advanced orders of the drug courses.

Stay tuned for more details on this developing story.

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