



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

Medications for Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19

Many Idahoans are asking about medications that can potentially treat or prevent COVID-19. **At this time, there are no medications that can effectively treat or prevent COVID-19.**

Two medicines, chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine, are being studied in several countries, including in the United States. Preliminary data, mostly in lab studies, suggests they might help, but these medicines require further testing in people before being determined safe for the public. Both of these medicines can have major side effects, including eye damage and heart problems, and may interact adversely with other commonly used medicines. Even with additional testing, both medicines require medical experts to monitor patients for safety.

Clinicians typically prescribe chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of malaria and autoimmune disorders, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Another drug, azithromycin, which providers commonly prescribe as a “Z-pack” to treat certain infections, has also received mentions in the news as a potential treatment for COVID-19. The amount of scientific data to support azithromycin’s potential benefit for COVID-19 is more limited than chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine. The use of azithromycin combined with either chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine increases the risk of severe side effects.

Given the very limited data on the use of these medicines – chloroquine, hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin – for COVID-19, known safety issues, and the need to ensure these medicines are available for patients that need them for malaria and autoimmune diseases, taking these medications for COVID-19 is not recommended outside of clinical trials or when prescribed by and under the supervision of your healthcare provider and always according to the instructions provided.

The Idaho Board of Pharmacy has established new rules to prevent hoarding and over-prescribing of these medicines for patients who do not have medical reasons to take them. More information on the Idaho Board of Pharmacy rules can be found on [FAQ for COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency](#) and [Rule 704 Medication Limitations addition, FDA and DEA updates](#).

Information on these and other medicines under investigation for COVID-19 can also be found on the [CDC’s website for Interim Guidance for Management of Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#).