



Alberta Health Services

COVID-19 Info: [For Albertans](#) | [For Health Professionals](#) | [Vaccine](#) | [Testing](#) | [Results](#) | [Family Support & Visitation](#)

A [CMOH order](#) remains in effect that requires continuous masking at all AHS and Covenant facilities provincewide.

Ivermectin: A useful drug, but not a treatment for COVID-19

October 12, 2021

Beyond *the* Headlines



The COVID-19 pandemic has been long and tiresome to say the least. We all want – and need – safe, effective therapies to help prevent more suffering and death.

Unfortunately, in the sometimes desperate search for treatments to prevent or treat COVID-19, an epidemic of misinformation has emerged around which medications are, and aren't, effective against COVID-19. There are several effective medications Alberta Health Services (AHS) is using to treat COVID-19 in hospitalized patients, but ivermectin is not one of them.

To suggest that AHS is withholding life-saving treatment by not supporting the use of ivermectin in the treatment of COVID-19 is wrong.

Claims that either the veterinary or human form of the drug is a life-saving medication against COVID-19 are not supported by current research. If there was good evidence for its use against this virus, AHS would absolutely be using it to help patients and reduce the burden on our healthcare system. As this evidence does not exist, AHS does not recommend the use of ivermectin to prevent or treat COVID-19 - not even as a "just in case" measure.

Although some early studies into the use of ivermectin against COVID-19 suggested possible benefit, none of the recent high-quality trials where results have been reviewed and assessed have supported these findings. There are genuine concerns of fraudulent data being reported from some of the early trials, and the largest trial that supported ivermectin use has already been withdrawn as a result of data fraud.

Alberta Health Services' Scientific Advisory Group has reviewed the existing studies using ivermectin in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. Based on the weakness of the existing studies – including small sample sizes, inappropriate study designs and inadequate controls – the Scientific Advisory Group agrees with expert groups like Health Canada, the Food and Drug Administration, World Health Organization and professional regulatory groups such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and the Alberta College of Pharmacy. There is no high-quality evidence that ivermectin is effective against COVID-19.

Neither the veterinary nor human drug versions of ivermectin have been deemed safe or effective for use in treating or preventing COVID-19. Even the drug manufacturer has issued a statement that ivermectin should not be used for COVID-19.

Ivermectin is a useful anti-parasitic developed initially for treatment of worms and parasites in animals. It has also been found useful in the treatment of some human diseases related to worms and parasites. But parasites are not the same as viruses, and COVID-19 is caused by a virus.

There is no evidence that ivermectin benefits COVID-19 patients, but there are known harms. Ivermectin use has been associated with rash, nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, abdominal pain, tremors, seizures and severe hepatitis (liver disease) requiring hospitalization.

Further, the use of veterinary versions of ivermectin is risky because they may contain ingredients not used in medications for humans, and are meant for use in much larger animals like horses and cattle. Ingestion of large amounts of veterinary ivermectin can cause poisoning and even lead to death.

The use of a veterinary drug not approved for use in humans is not acceptable within AHS facilities. Any claims of it being used will be thoroughly reviewed.

Further, because of inappropriate use of ivermectin there is a critical shortage of it in many areas and it is not available to treat those with parasitic diseases, meaning some individuals may suffer needlessly.

It can be easy, especially in today's digital age, to become caught up in disinformation circulating through social media, where scientific-sounding videos and articles of "evidence" and conspiracy theories play off pandemic anxiety. This pandemic of misinformation is eroding public confidence in effective medical treatments and in the healthcare system to the point of endangering lives.

We urge the public not to misuse unproven medications in their efforts to avoid or manage COVID-19. It is dangerous. Visit www.ahs.ca/covid to get the facts, and to view the full report from the Scientific Advisory Group.

Vaccination remains our best means of preventing COVID-19. Our vaccines are safe, fully approved and have been studied in high quality trials of tens of thousands of people. All Albertans who are eligible are encouraged to book their shot by calling 811, visiting a walk-in clinic, contacting a doctor's office or visiting bookvaccine.alberta.ca.

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