

Antiviral Drugs

[Host] Many people believe there is no treatment for a virus -- meaning you have to let it run its course. But when it comes to influenza, there are prescription drugs that can be used for treatment. Dr. Bresee, can you tell us about these drugs?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Well, these prescription drugs are called antivirals. They can make us feel better faster or they can make our symptoms milder. They're really a critical tool in treating flu, especially for those at high risk of severe complications if they get the flu.

[Host] And how will antiviral drugs be used during this pandemic?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Well, during a pandemic, our priority will be to treat the most severely ill patients, such as people hospitalized, but also people who are sick but have underlying conditions that predispose them to being severely ill if they get the flu. Priority groups are people like pregnant women, the youngest children, elderly people, or people with underlying chronic diseases, like heart disease, diabetes, or asthma.

[Host] And when should people take antivirals, and where can they get them?

[Dr. Joe Bresee] Well, for treatment, they work best if you treat early -- within two days of getting sick. They're prescription drugs, so you have to get them from your doctor.

[Host] Thank you, Doctor. To learn more about antiviral drugs, visit www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.