

## Rapid Increase in Ivermectin Prescriptions and Reports of Severe Illness Associated with Use of Products Containing Ivermectin to Prevent or Treat COVID-19

### Summary

Ivermectin is an antiparasitic drug used commonly in humans and animals. Although it is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of some parasitic worms, external parasites and skin conditions, evidence shows it is ineffective against treating the COVID-19 virus and the side effects can be potentially dangerous.

Side effects may include, but are not limited to, skin rash, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, facial or limb swelling, dizziness, seizures, confusion, a sudden drop in blood pressure, and liver injury (hepatitis). Drugs prescribed for animals are often highly concentrated because they are used for large animals and therefore may be toxic to humans. The FDA has received multiple reports of people who were hospitalized after self-medicating with ivermectin intended for horses. In July 2021, poison control centers across the country reported a five-fold increase in the number of calls for human exposure to ivermectin.

Despite the dangers, nationwide the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has seen a sharp increase in both providers prescribing and patients requesting ivermectin for COVID-19. According to the CDC, during the second week of August more than 88,000 prescriptions were reported nationwide, which is 24-times higher than the number of prescriptions written before the pandemic and more than double the previous peak of prescriptions written in early January 2021. The FDA has established a cross-agency task force that closely monitors for fraudulent COVID-19 products that claim to prevent, diagnose, treat, or cure COVID-19.

Getting vaccinated is the most safe and effective way to protect yourself and prevent severe sickness and death from COVID-19. Everyone 12 and older is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Those who have not been vaccinated are encouraged to [make an appointment today](#).

### Recommendations for Clinicians and Public Health Practitioners

- Be aware that ivermectin is not currently authorized or approved by FDA for treatment of COVID-19. NIH has also determined that there are currently insufficient data to recommend ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19.
- Educate patients about the risks of using ivermectin without a prescription, or ingesting ivermectin formulations that are meant for

external use or ivermectin-containing products formulated for veterinary use.

- Advise patients to immediately seek medical treatment if they have taken any ivermectin or ivermectin-containing products and are experiencing symptoms. Signs and symptoms of ivermectin toxicity include gastrointestinal effects (nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea), headache, blurred vision, dizziness, tachycardia, hypotension, visual hallucinations, altered mental status, confusion, loss of coordination and balance, central nervous system depression, and seizures. Ivermectin may increase sedative effects of other medications such as benzodiazepines and barbiturates. Call the poison control center hotline (1-800-222-1222) for medical management advice.
- Educate patients and the public to get vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is safe and the most effective means to prevent infection and protect against severe disease and death from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including the Delta variant.
- Educate patients and the public to use COVID-19 prevention measures including wearing masks in indoor public places, physical distancing by staying at least six feet from other people who don't live in the same household, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

### **Recommendations for the Public**

- Be aware that currently, ivermectin has not been proven as a way to prevent or treat COVID-19.
- Do not swallow ivermectin products that should be used on skin (e.g., lotions and creams) or are not meant for human use, such as veterinary ivermectin products.
- Seek immediate medical attention or call the poison control center hotline (1-800-222-1222) for advice if you have taken ivermectin or a product that contains ivermectin and are having symptoms. Signs and symptoms include gastrointestinal effects (nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea), headache, blurred vision, dizziness, fast heart rate, and low blood pressure. Other severe nervous system effects have been

reported, including tremors, seizures, hallucinations, confusion, loss of coordination and balance, decreased alertness, and coma.

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is approved by FDA and is the safest and most effective way to prevent getting sick and protect against severe disease and death from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including the Delta variant.
- Protect yourself and others from getting sick with COVID-19. In addition to vaccination, wear masks in indoor public places, practice staying at least six feet from other people who don't live in your household, avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer that has at least 60 percent alcohol.

#### **For More Information**

[NIH COVID-19 Treatment Ivermectin Guidelines](#)

[FDA Consumer Alert on Use of Ivermectin to Treat or Prevent COVID-19](#)

[Washington State Department of Health News Release: Ivermectin should not be used to prevent or treat COVID-19](#)

[FDA MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program](#)

[CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#)


[U.S. Government Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#)

[American Association of Poison Control Centers](#)

[Press Release: American College of Medical Toxicology Reports Data on Adverse Effects and Toxicity from Unapproved Use of Ivermectin for the Prevention or Treatment of COVID-19](#)

[Treatments Your Healthcare Provider Might Recommend if You Are Sick](#)

#### **References**

1 Lind JN, Lovegrove MC, Geller AI, Uyeki TM, Datta SD, Budnitz DS. [Increase in Outpatient Ivermectin Dispensing in the US During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-Sectional Analysis](#). J Gen Intern Med. 2021 Jun 18:1-3. doi: 10.1007/s11606-021-06948-6.

**THANK YOU FOR REPORTING**

# PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

THURSTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
412 LILLY RD NE  
OLYMPIA, WA, 98506-5132  
DISEASE REPORTING: (360)786-5470 INFORMATION: (360) 867-2500  
Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH, Acting Health Officer



08/30/2021

## TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY

Voice mail for reporting <b>non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day)</b>	Phone: 360-786-5470 Fax: 360-867-2601 Fax: 833-499-1803
<b>Day time immediately reportable conditions</b> – Call detailed information to the 24-hour Notifiable Condition Reporting Line at 360-786-5470. Messages are picked up hourly. If a call back can't wait call 360-867-2500 and ask staff to locate a Communicable Disease staff.	Phone: 360-786-5470
<b>After hours immediately and 24-hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency</b>	Call 1-800-986-9050
No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is <b>immediately notifiable</b>	1-877-539-4344

Communicable Disease Updates are posted online at: <http://bit.ly/CDUpdatePHSS>