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# New COVID-19 drug saves lives and cuts time in hospital

[HON ANDREW LITTLE\(/MINISTER/HON-ANDREW-LITTLE\)](#)[Health \(/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/health\)](#)

New Zealand has secured access to an important new COVID-19 drug that can save lives and cut time in hospital, Health Minister Andrew Little said today.

“Earlier this month, we were one of the first countries to buy molnupiravir, an anti-viral drug showing promising potential at stopping people with mild-to-medium symptoms of COVID-19 needing to go to hospital,” Andrew Little said.

“Today, I am very pleased that Pharmac has secured access to another important drug that could help treat people with medium-to-severe COVID-19, especially those with compromised immune systems.

“Ronapreve is a monoclonal antibody drug and there is a lot of excitement about it. The clinical advice is that it is a massive advance, because it reduces the severity of COVID-19 and decreases the risk of patients passing the virus on to other people.

“That’s hugely important, not only because of the lives it could save directly, but also because it will take pressure off our hospitals, which means they can get on with treating people with other conditions.

“Pharmac, the national drug-buying agency, has secured access to enough doses of Ronapreve to be able to treat 5300 people and expects to be able to buy more next year.

“When we created the special COVID-19 budget, we expected Pharmac to act quickly and secure treatments for New Zealand, and that’s what it’s doing.

“Ronapreve, along with molnupiravir and other drugs, form part of our armoury against the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting people and hospital services against its worst impacts.

“However, other actions are still just as important as they have ever been. Getting at least 90 per cent of people who can be vaccinated, and practical measures like wearing facemasks and social distancing are all part of the deal.