

HEALTH ADVISORY



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

REGION IV PUBLIC HEALTH

Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum
counties and Cowlitz Tribe

To: Physicians and other health care providers

Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region IV health officers:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182

Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

Steven Krager, MD, MPH

Clark County Public Health, 564.397.8182

Skamania County Community Health, 509.427.3850

Cowlitz County Health & Human Services, 360.414.5599

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services, 360.795.6207

Alert categories:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

Ivermectin should not be used to prevent or treat COVID-19



Summary

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Region IV health officers are warning against the use of ivermectin to prevent or treat COVID-19. 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.

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. These reports include increased use of veterinary products not meant for human consumption. Drugs prescribed for animals are often highly concentrated because they are used for large animals and therefore may be toxic to humans.

Despite the dangers, nationwide the 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.

Recommendations for providers

The CDC issued a [Health Alert Network advisory](#) on Thursday with the following recommendations:

- Be aware that ivermectin is not currently authorized or approved by FDA for treatment of COVID-19. National Institutes of Health 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.

Pharmacists receiving prescriptions for ivermectin for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19 should use their professional judgement in determining whether to fill them. If you have concerns related to the prescribing practices of a practitioner, it may be appropriate to reach out to the corresponding licensing board or commission.

Rules relevant to providing appropriate medication therapy can be found in [WAC 246-945-415](#) and [WAC 246-945-305](#).

To learn more, please review [these FAQs](#) from the FDA on ivermectin and COVID-19.

Thank you for your partnership.

Local health jurisdiction	Phone	Fax
Clark County Public Health	564.397.8182	564.397.8080
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143