



## HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# US to Invest \$3 Billion on Antiviral Drugs for COVID-19

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The United States is spending \$3.2 billion to develop drugs to fight COVID-19 and other viruses that could turn into pandemics.

Dr. Anthony Fauci is the nation's top infectious disease expert. He announced the investment during a Thursday briefing at the White House. The investment is part of a new "antiviral program for pandemics" that will develop drugs to treat diseases caused by dangerous viruses like the coronavirus.

The investment will speed up human trials of several promising drugs to treat COVID-19. Some are already under development and could be ready by year's end. The money will also provide support for research, development and manufacturing.

Fauci said the new program would invest in "**accelerating** things that are already in progress" for COVID-19. He added it will also support new treatments for other viruses.

"There are few treatments that exist for many of the viruses that have pandemic **potential**," said Fauci.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has already approved one antiviral drug, remdesivir, against COVID-19. But the World Health Organization recommended against its use in COVID-19 patients. The drug was originally developed for the Ebola virus.

The health agency has also permitted emergency use of three antibody treatments to help the body fight the virus.

All the currently available treatments must be performed at hospitals or medical centers. They have mostly been shown to help patients avoid hospitalization or shorten their recovery time by several days.

Health experts, including Fauci, have been calling for the development of a simple drug that patients could take themselves. Several companies, including Merck, Pfizer, and Roche, are now testing such a treatment.

News of the Biden administration's plans for the "antiviral program for pandemics" was first reported by *The New York Times*.

The news organization said Fauci's support for the program came from his own experience fighting AIDS some thirty years ago. In the 1990s, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, under Fauci, conducted research that led to some of the first antiviral drugs for H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Hai Do wrote this story for Learning English with additional reporting from the Associated Press. Susan Shand was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**accelerate** - v. to move faster

**potential** - adj. capable of becoming real

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