

FDA: Do not use malaria drugs to treat COVID-19 except in trials, hospitals

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Editor's note: For the latest news on coronavirus disease 2019, visit <https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/01/28/coronavirus>.

Health officials are warning people not to use malaria drugs hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine to treat coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) except in limited circumstances.

“These medicines have a number of side effects, including serious heart rhythm problems that can be life-threatening,” the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said in [an alert issued Friday](#).

The drugs have been given [emergency use authorization](#) for COVID-19 patients in clinical trials and in hospitals when they are not able to participate in trials. While they have been reported in the media, they have not been proven safe or effective against COVID-19. Use of the drugs can cause rapid heart rate and abnormal heart rhythms, especially in patients with heart and kidney disease or those taking other medicines, according to the FDA. They also can increase insulin levels and cause hemolysis.

Health care professionals who would like to use the medicines to treat a patient for COVID-19 should look for a [clinical trial](#). Patients taking these drugs will need evaluating and monitoring, including electrocardiogram, electrolytes, renal function and hepatic tests.

Adverse events should be reported to the FDA's MedWatch Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/index.cfm>.

