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More options for severe Covid-19 treatment

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To treat patients with more severe forms of Covid-19, the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) has included the use of remdesivir, steroids such as dexamethasone, tocilizumab and baricitinib in its treatment guidelines.

Remdesivir, an antiviral, is used on patients who need low amounts of oxygen support, while dexamethasone is for patients who require higher amounts of oxygen support or a machine to aid their breathing.

For patients who cannot be treated with dexamethasone due to reasons such as poorly controlled diabetes or osteoporosis (a type of bone disease), baricitinib can be considered, said Associate Professor David Lye, director of the Infectious Disease Research and Training Office at NCID.

Baricitinib, a drug that reduces the activity of the immune system, has been used to treat patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

On the other hand, patients who do not show any improvement after being given dexamethasone, or who continue to show inflammation in the body, will be given tocilizumab, added Prof Lye.

Tocilizumab is a monoclonal antibody which is able to blunt a hyperinflammatory response in the body, especially among those with severe Covid-19.