

# Use malaria drugs only for virus emergencies: EU agency

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Anti-malarial drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine should only be used to treat COVID-19 in clinical trials or in case of "national emergency", the European Medicine Agency warned Wednesday.

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Around the world, countries are expanding access to the two compounds, which are used to treat malaria and are known to have anti-viral properties.

The medicines have shown early promise against the COVID-19 illness in early studies in France and China.

But the EMA cautioned that the drugs should not be used to treat COVID-19 cases unless absolutely necessary.

"It is very important that patients and healthcare professionals only use chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for their authorised uses or as part of clinical trials or [national emergency](#)-use programmes for the treatment of COVID-19," it said.

Both drugs have a number of potentially [serious side effects](#), especially when taken in high doses or administered in tandem with other medications.

"They must not be used without a prescription and without supervision by a doctor; prescriptions should not be given outside their authorised uses except in the setting of a clinical trial or nationally agreed protocols," the EMA said in a statement.

There are also fears of shortages particularly of chloroquine, the less risky of the two medicines that is also used to treat arthritis.

Several countries are conducting [clinical trials](#) for the drugs as part of their campaigns to quell the COVID-19 pandemic.

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