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Covid-19: Cancer care at home scheme is extended by NHS England

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A scheme that has enabled patients in England with cancer to swap their treatments for alternatives that can be taken at home during the covid-19 pandemic has been extended until this summer and could be further extended until March 2022.

The initiative includes more than 30 drugs and allows patients to access treatment while reducing the number of required hospital visits or the impact on a patient's immune system. So far around 8000 people have taken up the scheme.

The swaps available include targeted hormone therapies such as enzalutamide for prostate cancer, trametinib as a tablet alternative to chemotherapy for some ovarian cancer, and ixazomib as an oral alternative to myeloma treatment that would require more hospital visits and injections.

Clare Turnbull, professor of cancer genomics at the Institute of Cancer Research, said, "These treatment swaps, such as targeted cancer drugs that can be taken at home and have less of an impact on patients' immune system, have the potential to make a huge difference in keeping vulnerable patients safe. This is an important step among many that are needed to tackle the cancer backlog that has built up over the past year."

Jo Churchill, health minister, said, "Innovative and less invasive treatments mean thousands of people living with cancer—all in the comfort and safety of their own homes—can receive the best possible care.

"Thanks to the enormous efforts of the NHS, tens of thousands of patients have continued to receive cancer treatment, and I urge anyone with symptoms to come forward and speak to their GP. Help us to help you."