



## COVID-19 update

Keeping you informed

### Stay up to date

Blue Shield is closely monitoring the trajectory of COVID-19, including applicable state and federal policy, and we will continue to keep you informed of policy changes affecting your employer groups.

We understand the importance of COVID-19 diagnostic tests for your clients as a method for supporting their workforce and anticipating their employees' needs.

With various parts of the economy re-opening, and continuing concerns over COVID-19, Blue Shield recommends that your clients' members seeking to be tested for COVID-19 visit a network provider or testing site. Members who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or who think they may have been exposed can visit their network provider for an assessment of whether they should be tested for COVID-19. If a test is required, the provider can assist with locating an appropriate testing site.

If your clients' members meet the [California Department of Managed Healthcare's](#) definition of "essential worker," they may obtain COVID-19 diagnostic testing without a provider order. Members who qualify as an essential worker and want to be tested without visiting their provider must contact Blue Shield about network testing options. This can be done by accessing Blue Shield's updated [COVID-19 resource page](#) to locate a network testing site.

Additionally, we created this [grid and workflow document](#) to help you and your clients understand the differences for essential, non-essential, asymptomatic, and symptomatic individuals.

#### **What's new with testing**

On August 27, the Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the deployment of 150 million rapid test kits ([read the announcement](#)). Rapid testing is not new; they are becoming more available. These kits use antigen testing, as opposed to the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, which must be done in a laboratory. It is important to consider the accuracy of rapid testing is lower than PCR tests, which require specimens to be processed in a lab. [Read the CDC overview of COVID-19 testing](#). The availability of these tests will primarily be determined at the state level.

As these rapid tests become more readily available in the market, it is important for employers and members to understand their use, as well as what is a covered benefit. Cost coverage for rapid test kits aligns with other COVID-19 testing; if ordered by a provider, it is a covered benefit at no cost to the member. Essential workers can use a rapid test without a provider order under [DMHC guidelines](#), but member cost shares will apply. Our COVID-19 resource pages for members and employers are intended to help guide decisions.

[Pooled testing](#) is a method for combining asymptomatic specimens before running tests for COVID-19. Pool tests can be processed by certified labs to generate a single result. While the cost of pooled samples is currently the same as individual COVID-19 diagnostic testing, at this time, providers or employers cannot request pool testing. The use of pool testing is at the discretion of the certified laboratory conducting the test.

More information is available on our [resource page for COVID-19](#) – which is updated regularly. You can also see the latest updates from Blue Shield on our [News Center](#) or have them delivered to your mailbox by [subscribing here](#).

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