



COVID-19 update

Keeping you informed

COVID-19 vaccine: what you need to know

We understand how important it is to have reliable information about the availability of FDA-emergency use authorized vaccines, while maintaining the fight against COVID-19. We are monitoring developments closely and will make regular updates to our [COVID-19 Resources site](#) for brokers and employers.

Cost

Blue Shield of California members can receive COVID-19 vaccinations, considered a preventive service, **at no member cost share** and with **no provider order**.^{*} Coverage will be provided for both in-network and out-of-network providers through the duration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

During the initial phase of vaccinations, the cost of the vaccine itself will be covered by the federal government, but the cost of the administration of the shots will be the responsibility of health plans. For fully-insured plans, Blue Shield will cover this cost. Self-funded plans will be responsible for reimbursing the cost of administration. For network providers, reimbursement will be based on the contracted rate, and for non-network providers, plans are required to reimburse a "reasonable" rate. According to [Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#), the Medicare reimbursement rate will be considered reasonable. That rate will be \$16.94 for the first dose and \$28.39 for the second dose, when applicable.

^{*} Note: self-funded grandfathered (pre-ACA) plans may include preventive care benefits, including vaccinations, with a member cost-share. Employer groups with these plans may opt to adjust this benefit for the COVID-19 vaccine and should work with their Blue Shield account representative.

Distribution and Timing

- The [first doses](#) of the vaccine have started to arrive in California.
- According to the CDC, people working in direct health care or in long-term care settings will receive first priority. Those with high-risk medical conditions will receive second priority. The CDC will provide directions for distribution. However, states are expected to play a big role in the [distribution strategy](#).
- Health plans must provide coverage for a qualifying coronavirus preventive service no later than 15 business days after the date that the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) or the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) makes an applicable recommendation. Coverage is not dependent on type of FDA approval or authorization.

Safety is still the most effective way to fight COVID-19

The availability of a safe and effective vaccine is just the first step in bringing the pandemic to an end. Distributing a vaccine to achieve population immunity will take tremendous coordination from state and local governments, with the help of health plans like Blue Shield of California.

Member communications

Communications with similar essential information will be sent to members as well, beginning December 17, and timely information will be posted on www.blueshieldca.com.

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