

Coronavirus: Provider Updates

Blue Cross is closely monitoring the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and will publish information and updates on this page.

Helpful Links:

- [Telehealth Coverage Guidelines](#)
- [Telehealth Billing Guide - Updated March 26, 2020](#)
- [COVID-19 Coding Guide](#)

Latest Updates

March 27, 2020

Caution About Use of Hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) to Treat COVID-19

With the recent increased interest in the use of hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) and chloroquine to treat patients diagnosed with COVID-19, various agencies are advising that research is not available to support the use of these medications for treating the novel coronavirus. Also, because the side effects are well known and potentially serious, the ratio of risk-to-benefits is currently not favorable.

The following resources provide information about use of these medications for COVID-19:

- **Alabama Board of Pharmacy:** [Hydroxychloroquine \(Plaquenil\) and Chloroquine](#)
- **CDC:** [Information for Clinicians on Therapeutic Options for COVID-19 Patients](#)
- **American Medical Association:** [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Update: Chloroquine /Hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin](#)
- **American Medical Association, American Pharmacists Association and American Society of Health-System Pharmacists:** [Joint Statement About COVID-19 Medications](#)

March 27, 2020

Updated State Lab Requirements for COVID-19 Testing

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) recently announced updated COVID-19 testing requirements for specimens processed by the state's Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL). Continue to check the [ADPH website](#) for the latest information about COVID-19 testing.

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March 25, 2020

FDA Warns About Fraudulent Test Kits for COVID-19

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced [concerns about unauthorized, fraudulent test kits](#) that are being marketed to test for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the home. As of March 20, 2020, the FDA had not authorized any at-home test for COVID-19.

Blue Cross will cover COVID-19 diagnostic tests that are consistent with CDC guidance. To ensure testing accuracy, a specimen must be obtained and appropriately processed for testing by or under the direct supervision of a licensed medical professional.

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues to develop, we are receiving information about an increasing number of healthcare scams related to this emergency situation. We recommend providers evaluate any new services that are recommended for their patients to ensure that they're legitimate and approved by the federal agencies and covered by Blue Cross.

Updated March 24, 2020

Telehealth Coverage Expansion

We are continuing to update our [Telehealth Coverage Guidelines](#) with the following additions:

- Occupational, speech and physical therapies
- Teledentistry services
- Interprofessional hospital consult

Detailed information about these added services as well as those previously announced is available in our [Telehealth Billing Guide](#). As we continue to expand our telehealth coverage, we will update this billing guide to provide additional details.

Our [Telehealth Coverage Guidelines](#) are effective starting March 1, 2020, and expire on April 16, 2020. They will be reevaluated for a continuance as needed.

March 24, 2020

Member Cost Sharing Waived for Coronavirus and Telehealth Services

To ensure your patients get the care they need during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we are waiving any up-front member cost-sharing (copayments, deductibles, co-insurance) for the following scenarios:

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- Claims for in-network services rendered in the physician's office, emergency room or urgent care that include a **COVID-19 diagnosis code(s)** as specified in the [COVID-19 Coding Guide: Information for Providers and Labs](#).
- Claims for **in-network telehealth services** identified under the recently expanded [Telehealth Coverage Guidelines](#) regardless of whether there is a diagnosis on the claim directly related to COVID-19.
- Claims submitted by in-network laboratories for processing **coronavirus tests**.

These waivers are retroactive for dates of service back to **March 1, 2020**, and effective through **April 16, 2020**. They will be reevaluated for continuance as needed.

Continue to check [AlabamaBlue.com/providers/coronavirus](https://alabamablue.com/providers/coronavirus) regularly for additional details about the types of services included in these waiver scenarios as well as for any changes in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans nationwide are implementing these types of cost-sharing waivers. There could be variations on cost-sharing for telehealth services for some patients who have employer-based coverage or coverage under another Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plan outside of Alabama. **Always check eligibility and benefits through *ProviderAccess* or your practice management system to confirm cost-sharing details.**

March 19, 2020

[COVID-19 Coding Guide: Information for Providers and Labs](#)

This guide outlines a summary of the coding instruction provided by the CDC, World Health Organization and CMS.

March 11, 2020

[Blue Cross Coronavirus Response Plans](#)

We have prepared contingency plans to ensure business operations continue to run smoothly in the event of an outbreak in Alabama. This means providers and their patients who are Blue Cross members will continue to receive the highest quality service possible from us.

[Prescription Drug Early-Refill Restrictions Lifted](#)

To help ensure that your patients who are Blue Cross members have an ample supply of their medications in the event of a coronavirus emergency, early-refill restrictions that are standard in our pharmacy management safety edits will be temporarily removed.

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According to the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), current respiratory outbreaks such as influenza could make it difficult to identify an outbreak of this new coronavirus. Therefore, Blue Cross asks you to encourage your patients to get the flu vaccine if they have not done so. We are also communicating this information to our [members](#).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ADPH have published guidance for healthcare providers. Blue Cross encourages our providers to follow the published guidelines from the ADPH and CDC for preparedness, symptom evaluation and reporting.

Additional Resources for Providers

- [ADPH Guidance for Providers](#)
- [ADPH Screening Tool](#)
- [CDC Checklist](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 map](#)
- [CDC Notice for Healthcare Provider Offices](#)