

COVID-19 Vaccination & Testing FAQs
Last update: January 29, 2021

This resource provides an overview of a specific federal and state developments. It is subject to change and is not intended to be, and should not be construed as, legal advice for any particular situation.

VACCINATION QUESTIONS

1. When and where can I sign up for the vaccine?

A long list of eligible persons has been identified, including the Food and Agriculture workforce. See the full list here: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>. If you are eligible, you need to sign up through your county's health department website. Currently, each county is designating who can get vaccinated and when and where.

2. Who will pay for the vaccinations?

Vaccines are being provided free of charge by the federal government to all participants. The COVID immunizations are payable at 100% regardless of which plan the member is on. Employees will not be paying for the vaccines as there is no cost-sharing, like the flu vaccine, in network and out of network. The providers that administer the vaccine may charge a fee to a health plan or insurance company.

3. If you already had COVID-19, do you still need to get the vaccine?

Yes, the antibodies from the virus are thought to be short-lived. Vaccination extends the window of protection significantly.

4. Can a Phase 1B Essential Worker have their immediate family vaccinated?

No, Phase 1B is only for the worker employed in agriculture (not their spouse, children, or other family members).

5. Will getting the vaccine allow us to stop wearing masks?

No, not all exposure risks will be reduced by being vaccinated, and masks and social distancing will still be required at work sites.

6. Where can I access the latest information on COVID-19 vaccinations?

The Western Growers Family of Companies has developed a COVID-19 vaccination resources webpage that will be updated as new information becomes available. Be sure to check back often. Additionally, Western Growers will send members regular email updates.

7. How do my employees verify their eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine?

Phase 1B eligibility can be verified with a paycheck stub or a letter from the employer verifying they work in the county offering vaccinations and are employed by your agriculture business. If they have an employee ID badge, that would be useful, but not required. Please refer to our resource page for a template employment verification letter you can use for your employees by adding your company's logo.

8. What if my employee works in one county but lives in another?

Vaccines are currently being administered by the county and not the employer. If they work or live in a county offering the COVID-19 vaccine to Phase 1B Essential Workers, an employee will be eligible to receive the vaccination in either county. For vaccinations that require a booster, if they get vaccinated in one county, they must return to the same location for the second shot.

9. Which shot is being administered?

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations are being given. The Pfizer vaccine has a 21-day booster (second shot required) while the Moderna vaccine has a 28-day booster (second shot required). You must receive the same manufacturer's shot from the first to the second vaccine. Johnson & Johnson is developing a vaccine that is only one dose, which will be available soon, but the date has not been released.

10. Can I require my employees to get vaccinated as a condition of work? Can I require proof if someone claims to have been vaccinated?

Whether an employer may require COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of work is a matter of state or other applicable law. If an employer does require their employees to provide proof that they have received a COVID-19 vaccination, the employer cannot mandate that their employees provide any medical information as part of the proof..

11. After employees have been vaccinated, can they stop practicing other preventive measures such as social distancing and wearing masks?

No. Vaccinated individuals are still able to carry and transmit the virus to other individuals. The vaccine does NOT prevent you from getting other people sick. The CDC recommends that people continue to take preventive measures after they are vaccinated, such as wearing a mask, staying six feet away from others, avoiding crowds, washing hands often and cleaning high-touch surfaces frequently. Together, getting vaccinated and following the CDC's recommendations will offer the best protection from getting and spreading COVID-19.

12. If we vaccinate our employees, can we return to or reopen the workplace?

It is important to conduct a thorough assessment of the workplace to identify potential workplace hazards related to COVID-19. Widespread vaccination of employees can be one consideration for restarting operations and returning to the workplace. Other considerations for returning to the workplace include:

- The necessity for employees to physically return to the workplace and whether telework options can be continued.
- Transmission of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in the community (how many infections there are and how fast it's spreading).
- The ability of employees to practice social distancing and other prevention measures, like wearing masks, when in the workplace.
- Local or state mandates for business closure restrictions.

13. Is the 21 FOWARD initiative led by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) helping to get produce companies to sign-up for vaccines?

No, FDA's 21 FORWARD is a new data analysis tool that was created to inform FDA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an important partnership between the FDA, members of Operation Warp Speed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), data from 21 FORWARD is being made available to assist states with their planning efforts for vaccine distribution.

As part of this effort, some produce companies that are FDA-regulated facilities may receive calls from FDA, especially if they are in an area with high or anticipated incidences (COVID-19 hot spots). More information about this initiative can be found [here](#).

TESTING QUESTIONS

1. What is Western Growers Family of Companies doing to assist us with testing our employees?

Pinnacle Claims Management, part of Western Growers Family of Companies, is now offering rapid COVID-19 testing at employer locations. Pinnacle has obtained approval by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA) to provide COVID-19 testing. Our diagnostic rapid testing devices will allow our trained medical personnel to deliver highly accurate and automated COVID-19 results using direct nasal/nasopharyngeal swabs. These tests will provide employees with results in about 15 to 30 minutes and will also test for influenza. We will also be providing rapid testing at our California-based Cedar Health and Wellness Centers in Oxnard, Santa Maria, Salinas, and Watsonville.

2. Why should I sign up for Pinnacle's COVID rapid testing?

We know employers have an obligation to not only protect the health and safety of their workers, but also manage their businesses with as little interruption as possible. By ensuring employees have access to convenient rapid COVID-19 testing, employers can make informed decisions about an employee's return to work and help control the spread of the virus. We are committed to providing these onsite services to your employees to help limit the spread of COVID-19 in your workforce and communities.

3. What kinds of tests are acceptable to comply with the regulations' testing requirements?

Tests approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or that have an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from FDA to diagnose current infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus may be used. These include both PCR and antigen tests. The test must be administered in accordance with the FDA approval or FDA EUA, as applicable.

4. Is COVID-19 testing only available to people who have Cedar Clinic coverage, or can uninsured individuals also be tested (for a fee)? Is there a charge and, if so, how much (for both insured and uninsured)?

No; for uninsured and non-medically necessary tests we will bill the client on a per test basis. The fee is \$130. We are currently offering medically necessary testing at the Cedar clinics at no cost for plan participants. For those employees needing testing that is not deemed medically necessary, we offer testing for a fee. The employer will be billed for those tests on a monthly basis. If the non-medically necessary testing volume is high for an employer, we suggest setting up mobile testing. Please reach out to Jenny Yun, Manager of Clinical Services, at (949) 885-4792 or jyun@pinnacletpa.com to set up mobile testing services.

5. Do you need to make an appointment for COVID-19 testing at the Cedar Clinics, or do they accept walk-ins?

Walk-ins are accepted but appointments are recommended.

6. Are “return to work” tests covered or does insurance only pay for the first test?

The plan will pay for the test if they are medically necessary. That means if a provider decides they need to retest an individual, this test will be covered. All non-medically necessary tests are subject to a fee.