



Medi-Cal Rx

# COVID-19 Antigen Over-the-Counter Test Coverage Updates, Effective October 1, 2024

September 1, 2024

Effective October 1, 2024, quantity restrictions for over-the-counter (OTC) self-administered COVID-19 antigen tests, which test for diagnosis of a current infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), will be updated to **allow for 4 tests per 30-day period** per member. Covered Medi-Cal Rx tests are restricted to the [List of Contracted COVID-19 Antigen Over-the-Counter Tests](#), which has been updated to include added tests and can be found on the [Forms & Information](#) page of the [Medi-Cal Rx Provider Portal](#). Note that certain tests have been removed from the *List*. These tests may be covered through December 31, 2024, with an approved prior authorization (PA) request demonstrating medical necessity. On and after January 1, 2025, these deleted tests will no longer be billable through Medi-Cal Rx, even with an approved PA request. Refer to the updated *List* for product changes.

## Background

On February 9, 2023, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the [Fact Sheet: COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Transition Roadmap](#), which states that the federal COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) ended on May 11, 2023.

OTC self-administered COVID-19 antigen tests, which test for diagnosis of a current infection of SARS-CoV-2, will continue to remain a Medi-Cal Rx covered pharmacy benefit, subject to utilization controls and board of pharmacy prescription billing requirements.

California State Plan Amendment (SPA) 22-004 required the Medi-Cal program to provide, as a pharmacy benefit, OTC Emergency Use of Authorization (EUA) U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-authorized, self-administered COVID-19 antigen tests. Test kits can be dispensed from a pharmacy, written (or electronic equivalent) on a prescription, and signed by a licensed prescriber or a pharmacist. Test kits have been limited to 8 tests per member per month (or 4 test kits that include 2 separate tests) where the limit can be exceeded with an approved PA request showing medical necessity. Coverage for this benefit, directed by SPA 22-0044, was specific for the period starting March 11, 2021, and ending on September 30, 2024.

## Policy Effective After October 1, 2024

Medi-Cal Rx continues to cover specific OTC self-administered COVID-19 antigen tests for diagnosis of a current infection of SARS-CoV-2. Covered Medi-Cal Rx tests are listed in the [List of Contracted COVID-19 Antigen Over-the-Counter Tests](#).

The coverage of these tests will remain as a Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy benefit after October 1, 2024, as per the following policy:

- Prescriptions for contracted tests for diagnosis of a current infection with SARS-CoV-2 (Code I restriction for diagnosis), must be written (or be an electronic equivalent) and signed by a licensed prescriber or a pharmacist and require dispensing from a Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy provider; **AND**
- Medical supplies prescription requirements apply to these outpatient pharmacy disposable medical supplies with the exception that a licensed pharmacist can also prescribe these tests (refer to the *Medical Supplies* section of the [Medi-Cal Rx Provider Manual](#) for additional information); **AND**
- Pharmacy providers are required to have one-on-one documented contact (in-person, telehealth, or phone) with the member or caregiver prior to dispensing COVID-19 antigen tests; **AND**
- The member/caregiver must request that the pharmacy provider dispense the COVID-19 OTC tests; autofill is not permitted. Items dispensed without a valid, documented request will be denied as **not reasonable or necessary** and are subject to post-adjudication audit review by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS); **AND**
- Packages/kits cannot be broken or sold as individual tests; **AND**
- **New, effective October 1, 2024:** Quantities are restricted to up to **4 tests total** (2 kits for 2 tests/kit or 4 individually-containing single-test kits) currently on the [List of Contracted COVID-19 Antigen Over-the-Counter Tests](#), **per 30 days, per member**; **AND**
- Only 1 test-per-kit, or 2 tests-per-kit contracted billing codes (11-digit NDC-like number) are reimbursable, and kits cannot be broken and must be dispensed whole; **AND**
- No refills allowed; the member would need to obtain a new prescription for each dispensing; **AND**
- PA requests for quantities outside the allowed amounts will be denied, unless ordered or administered by a licensed prescriber, pharmacist, or pharmacy provider, following an individualized clinical assessment with appropriate medical necessity demonstrated.

Outpatient disposable medical supplies are a partial Medi-Cal carve-out and tests not listed in the [Medi-Cal Rx Provider Manual](#) may be a covered benefit through the member's medical coverage.

Managed care members should contact their individual medical plan for more information.

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests for diagnosis of a current infection with SARS-CoV-2 **are not a Medi-Cal Rx pharmacy benefit** but are a covered Medi-Cal **medical benefit** and billable through the member's medical coverage. PCR tests, which are more likely to detect the virus than antigen tests, will usually be administered by a health care provider in a clinic setting and transported to a laboratory for testing. It may take several days to receive results. Members should contact their medical benefits plan for information about PCR testing.

Refer to the [Testing for COVID-19](#) page on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#) for current COVID-19 testing information and guidelines.

To receive a test or test kit, the member must be eligible for Medi-Cal on the date of service (DOS). For the most current information regarding Medi-Cal's COVID-19 response, refer to the [COVID-19 Medi-Cal Response](#) page on the [DHCS website](#). For questions concerning the discontinuation of specific COVID-19 benefits, email DHCS at [COVID19Apps@dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:COVID19Apps@dhcs.ca.gov).

## Contact Information

You can call the Medi-Cal Rx Customer Service Center (CSC) at 1-800-977-2273, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year.

For other questions, email Medi-Cal Rx Education & Outreach at [MediCalRxEducationOutreach@primetherapeutics.com](mailto:MediCalRxEducationOutreach@primetherapeutics.com).