

NEWS RELEASE**Blue Cross NC Online Newsroom:** <http://mediacenter.bcbsnc.com>**For Immediate Release: March 17, 2020****Blue Cross NC to Cover Doctor Visits by Phone in Addition to Video***Members are encouraged to call their doctor and ask for a virtual visit to help prevent spread of COVID-19*

DURHAM, N.C. – Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) announced that it will cover virtual doctor visits, including those done by phone, the same as face-to-face visits according to a member's health plan. This is an expansion of the telehealth benefits Blue Cross NC has previously offered.

Blue Cross NC previously required video for virtual care visits. Covering audio-only visits will allow more people to access care at home. This change in coverage is intended to help slow the spread of COVID-19 by limiting exposure, mitigating the surge of demand on our healthcare system and helping protect health professionals on the front lines.

“As COVID-19 spreads, Blue Cross NC is working to remove barriers to care for our members,” said **Dr. Von Nguyen, vice president of clinical operations and innovations at Blue Cross NC**. “Staying home will help prevent the spread of illness and save lives. By covering all types of virtual doctor visits, we hope it will encourage people to get the care they need, when they need it, for the good of all North Carolinians.”

Members are encouraged to call their doctor and ask for a virtual visit. These virtual visits must be medically necessary and meet qualifying criteria.

More information for providers and customers on Blue Cross NC's expanded virtual health policy can be found at BlueCrossNC.com/Coronavirus.

In addition to expanding virtual access to health care providers, Blue Cross NC has taken the following steps to help our members as it monitors COVID-19. Those steps include:

- **Waiving out of pocket costs for COVID-19 testing**
On March 6, Blue Cross NC announced it will cover all out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 testing. This applies whether or not a member has met their deductible. The company also announced it will not require prior approval for that testing, or other medically necessary services for any members who are diagnosed with the disease. Blue Cross NC is covering doctor visits to screen for COVID-19 and any required care the same as any other doctor visit or care, based on your health plan. These changes apply to Blue Cross NC's fully insured, Medicare, State Health Plan and Federal Employee Program members. Self-funded employer groups have the option to apply these changes to their employees' plans.
- **Increasing access to medications**

Blue Cross NC is waiving early medication refill limits. This way, members can have the medicines they need on hand. This change applies to all Blue Cross NC card holders.

These measures will remain in effect for a 30-day period, starting March 6, and then be re-evaluated.

Blue Cross NC will provide updates to members as necessary. More information can be found at [BlueCrossNC.com/Coronavirus](https://www.bluecrossnc.com/Coronavirus).

The audio-only benefit change for virtual visits does not apply to Federal Employee Plan members. FEP members can find details on their [telehealth benefits here](#).

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) is committed to making health care better, simpler and more affordable since 1933. We have been driving better health in North Carolina for generations, working to tackle our communities' greatest health challenges. We serve our customers and communities of more than 3.8 million members, including approximately 1.1 million served on behalf of other Blue Plans. Blue Cross NC is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit Blue Cross NC online at www.bluecrossnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

###