



TECH

# Apple is offering free genetic tests to all its Silicon Valley employees

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## KEY POINTS

Apple employees can now access free genetic tests through AC Wellness.

Apple set up AC Wellness as a separate company in 2018 to provide primary care services exclusively to Apple employees.

AC Wellness and Color Genomics started working together on the pilot several months ago, sources tell CNBC.



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[Apple](#) employees in Silicon Valley can now get free genetic screenings for diseases from their on-site health clinics, thanks to a pilot partnership with Color Genomics.

Apple, which recently set up dedicated health clinics known as “AC Wellness” for employees and their dependents near its headquarters, has been working with Color for several months, according to several people with direct knowledge of the discussions. The people requested anonymity because they were not authorized to publicize the deal on their companies’ behalf.

The idea is to move health care at Apple’s clinics from reactive to proactive, as genetic tests can offer a window into health risks down the line. In some cases, patients can take preventative steps to reduce their likelihood of getting a disease.

By offering cutting-edge medical treatments like genetic testing, AC Wellness can help Apple recruit and retain talented employees. In addition, although AC Wellness is technically a separate company from Apple, medical experts have speculated that it could help Apple quietly [test new products or ideas without risking leaks](#). So the group’s partnership with Color could indicate Apple’s broader interest in the space.

Apple has [publicly acknowledged its interest in health](#) and is moving forward with a range of efforts, [including its health and fitness-tracking](#) Apple Watch, [its clinical research apps](#) in partnership with academic medical centers and [its partnership with the health insurer Aetna](#). Thus far, it has taken only tentative steps into genetics through a [move to bring genetic data into ResearchKit](#), its software that makes it easier for academic researchers to use the iPhone for medical studies.

AC Wellness, [which got its start in early 2018](#), has already opened several medical centers on the Apple Park campus, and in Santa Clara, a few miles north of Apple’s Cupertino, Calif. headquarters. The goal is to bring the “world’s best health care experience” to employees, [according to its website](#). Its clinicians and health coaches [are not employed by Apple](#), but they treat only Apple employees and their dependents. The administrative part of the business, which orders supplies and manages the clinical software, is run through a separate legal subsidiary of Apple to comply with regulations that ensure that employers don’t have direct access to employees’ most sensitive health information.

## DNA testing with a doctor’s approval

Color’s test analyzes gene mutations that are known to be associated with cancer and cardiovascular disease, as well as ancestry information.

Color doesn’t sell its test directly to consumers, unlike its competitors Ancestry and 23andMe. Instead, clinicians at AC Wellness must prescribe the Color test to Apple employees and provide follow-up consults after they get their results. Color allows doctors to recommend the whole test or specific parts of it, depending on factors like the patients’ medical history.

Apple isn’t the only company to partner with Color for employee testing. For instance, Jefferson Health, a hospital chain in greater Philadelphia and New Jersey, is [also working with Color to](#) offer free genetic tests to its 30,000 employees.

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patients about the benefit of getting a genetic test, and many don't feel comfortable talking through their results. That can be off-putting to some patients who approach their doctors to inquire about genetics.

“It’s really exciting that to see companies move to preserve health, rather than just treating patients when they’re ill,” said Dr. Robert Green, a medical geneticist at Harvard Medical School and a co-founder of a genetics company called Genome Medical.

Dr. Green has [conducted research](#) on how primary care doctors are talking to patients about gene sequencing services. “We’ve seen that there’s a huge gap between the recommendations around genetic testing, and what primary care clinicians are telling their patients,” he explained.

Apple isn’t the only technology company setting up health clinics to treat their employees. [Amazon recently launched](#) a virtual medical clinic called Amazon Care to its employees in the Seattle area, but it has not disclosed whether it is offering genetic tests.

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**VIDEO** 01:06

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