

How does the palm vein recognition system work, and how do I use it?

Beginning October 2009, a new biometric procedure will be added to the admissions process. This new procedure is called palm vein technology, which works by scanning the veins inside of your hand and creating a digital template that represents your vein pattern. To use the system, you hold your hand a few inches above a sensor, which records the pattern of your palm veins on a digital template. Palm vein patterns are unique to each individual — even identical twins have different patterns.

The admission process for a first-time test taker will differ slightly from a repeat test taker (a candidate who has previously tested with NCRA See below:

First-time test taker: Palm vein patterns will be taken instead of fingerprints. First-time test takers will have both palms scanned.

Repeat test taker: If you have had your digital fingerprint captured at a previous exam appointment, you will provide a fingerprint match and then enroll in the palm vein recognition system. Should you retake the test after you have a palm vein pattern template on file, you will use the palm vein system only. As palm vein templates are recorded for all those retaking the exam, digital fingerprints will no longer be captured.

The other steps of the admissions process will remain the same. Each test taker will still be required to bring a valid photo ID, have a photograph taken and sign a digital signature pad.

Check-in time: The check-in time for first-time examinees should be the less than five minutes. As the palm vein system is phased in, return test takers who have been fingerprinted before should plan on an extra 15 to 30 seconds for check-in.

Why is NCRA changing their admissions process?

NCRA is using palm vein recognition because it offers a form of positive identification that is highly accurate, and less intrusive and more culturally acceptable than some other identity verification technologies, such as digital fingerprinting.

Palm vein recognition allows NCRA to accurately identify people trying to take the test under assumed identities. By preventing proxy testers, the technology helps NCRA maintain the test's integrity.

What can I expect at the testing center, and how will my vein pattern be used?

You will have your palm vein patterns recorded when you arrive at the testing center to enroll for your exam. Your pattern will be matched when you return to the testing room after a break. Your palm vein patterns will also be compared with those of other test takers to allow Pearson VUE to find people who may have tested under multiple names or identities.

Why is palm vein recognition considered better than fingerprinting?

Several aspects of palm vein recognition make it more reliable and easier to use than fingerprinting. Palm vein patterns are invisible and virtually impossible to forge, making the system highly secure. The digitally encrypted palm vein patterns cannot be read by any other system. The test taker does not touch the palm vein sensor, eliminating the possibility of smudging. The system is also much more accessible for people with some physical disabilities.

How accurate is palm vein recognition?

A system test on 140,000 palm vein patterns from 70,000 people found the false acceptance rate (i.e., the likelihood it recorded one person's palm as someone else's) was less than 0.00008 percent. Because the blood veins in your palm stay in the same position as you age and through sickness and injury, their pattern record remains unique to you.

Will this technology slow down the check-in process?

No. The check-in time for test takers with no fingerprint on file, including all first-time examinees, should be the same or shorter than it is now. As the palm vein system is phased in, return test takers who have been fingerprinted before should plan on an extra 15 to 30 seconds for check-in.

Will I have to provide both a fingerprint and a palm vein pattern?

For first-time test takers, palm vein patterns will be taken instead of fingerprints. If you have had your digital fingerprint captured at a previous exam appointment, you will provide a fingerprint match and then enroll in the palm vein recognition system. Should you retake the test after you have a palm vein pattern template on file, you will use the palm vein system only. As palm vein templates are recorded for all those retaking the exam, digital fingerprints will no longer be captured. The other steps of the admission process will remain the same.

Are there any safety or health concerns caused by the palm vein recognition system?

No. The pattern reader uses a safe, near-infrared light source, similar to a television remote.

What security measures does Pearson VUE take with my palm vein pattern to ensure my privacy?

When the reader scans your palm, the information about your vein patterns is stored as a digital template. After you finish taking your exam, the template is sent via encrypted transmission with your test results to Pearson VUE. Your vein pattern template is stored separately from other information about you in the system.

What if I refuse to provide my palm vein pattern?

If you do not provide a palm vein pattern, you will not be permitted to take a NCRA exam.

What other organizations use palm vein recognition?

Hospitals, libraries, and financial institutions including banks are among other organizations that have successfully launched the new technology.