



### General State of COVID-19 Testing: PCR (Viral DNA or RNA) and Serology (Antibody)

- The need for COVID-19 testing (Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and Serology) for L.A. Care Health Plan's (L.A. Care) members should be based on medical necessity and current Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Los Angeles County Public Health Department testing guidance (LAC DPH).<sup>1,2</sup>
  - COVID-19 PCR tests (CDC or FDA approved) are the diagnostic test of choice to be used to determine whether the person is actively infected with COVID-19.
- L.A. Care and its delegates are required to waive prior authorization requests for COVID-19 PCR diagnostic testing to determine if a member is currently infected.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Currently, there are very few FDA or FDA Emergency Use Authorization approved COVID-19 Serology tests available. The Serology test is only helpful to determine if a person **was** infected with COVID-19.<sup>6</sup>
  - The California Coronavirus Testing Task Force (CATTFF) specifically notes that COVID-19 Serology testing should only be performed in limited situations and for purposes such as: surveillance study, identifying plasma donor, or use when the PCR testing is either possibly false negative, or there is an indication to determine if prior COVID-19 infection occurred (see testing guidelines).<sup>7</sup>
  - In general summary, the CDC<sup>8</sup> and LAC DPH currently do not see value in widespread use of Antibody/Serology testing for the purposes of diagnostic decision making and screening to go back to work, school, and other congregate settings.



### COVID-19 Testing and Cost Sharing/Billing

- Providers must not charge a copay or require patient payment for COVID-19 PCR testing.<sup>3,5</sup>
- In general, there should not be any copay or patient payment for FDA approved COVID-19 Serology testing when clinically indicated, as per the CATTFF published guidelines.<sup>6</sup>
- The Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) has stated that health plans and its delegates must cover COVID-19 tests that are FDA approved or authorized, or approved by the state, without prior authorization and at no cost to the enrollee. This applies to Medi-Cal, Medicare, and commercial plans.<sup>9</sup>
- State guidance for Medi-Cal further specifies that COVID-19 testing and related medically necessary treatment services, including services rendered outside of a hospital emergency department, are considered emergency services to treat an emergency medical condition.<sup>10</sup>
- Unless already contractually agreed to between L.A. Care or its delegates and the commercial laboratory or COVID-19 specimen collection services, L.A. Care and its delegates must reimburse for COVID-19 collection and testing at the Medicare fee schedule rates for all L.A. Care lines of business. All the codes have been determined to be Medi-Cal benefits.<sup>10,13,14,15</sup>
- Certain workplaces may require their employees to get tested regularly. If it is surveillance for the purpose of work, then the test should be paid for by the employer.<sup>12</sup>



Please see an adaptation of the American Medical Association’s guide for CPT reporting for COVID-19 testing<sup>16</sup>:

Where is the patient assessed?						
Assessment	In office		E/M Telehealth		Telephone	Virtual check-in or online visit
	New Patient	Established Patient	New Patient	Established Patient	New or established patient	New or established patient
	99201	99212	99201* (typical time: 10 min.)	99212* (typical time: 10 min.)	99441 (5-10 min.)	99421 (5-10 min.)
	99202	99213	99202* (typical time: 20 min.)	99213* (typical time: 15 min.)	99442 (11-20 min.)	99422 (11-20 min.)
	99203	99214	99203* (typical time: 30 min.)	99214* (typical time: 25 min.)	99443 (21-30 min.)	99423 (21-30 min.)
	99204	99215	99204* (typical time: 45 min.)	99215* (typical time: 40 min.)		G2010 Remote images
	99205		99205* (typical time: 45 min.)			G2012 Virtual check-in
Where is the swab collected?						
Swab Collection	During E/M in-person visit		Go to office or group practice’s testing site for swab		Go to independent testing site	
	N/A (included in E/M)		99211		99211	
			99000** (if code requirements are met)		99001** (if code requirements are met)	
Where is the test performed?						
COVID-19 Test Conducted	Laboratory					
	87635 (reported by laboratory)					

\* = See Medicare will pay telehealth at office visit rates and not conduct audits to ensure prior relationship.

\*\*Check with specific payor. Not covered by Medicare



**Below are the released codes to report and track COVID-19 PCR testing, including specimen collection:**

New/ Existing	Type	CPT/HCPC/ICD- 10 Codes	Effective Date	Description
New	HCPCS Level II Codes	U0001	2/4/2020	2019 Novel Coronavirus Real Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Test Pane
New	HCPCS Level II Codes	U0002	2/4/2020	2019-nCoV Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2/2019-nCoV (COVID-19)
New	HCPCS Level II Codes	G2023	3/1/2020	Specimen collection for SARS Coronavirus disease COVID-19, any specimen source
New	HCPCS Level II Codes	G2024	3/1/2020	Specimen collection for SARS Coronavirus disease COVID-19, from an individual in a skilled nursing facility or by a laboratory on behalf of a Home Health Agency, any specimen source
New	PATH & LAB - MICROBIOLOGY	87635*	3/13/2020	SARS-COV-2 COVID-19 amplified probe technique (AMP PRB)
New	HCPCS - PATH & LAB	U0003	2/4/2020	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) AMP PRB
New	HCPCS - PATH & LAB	U0004	2/4/2020	2019-nCoV Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2/2019-nCoV (COVID-19) AMP PRB
New	ICD-10-CM Code(s)	U07.1	4/1/2020	2019-nCoV acute respiratory disease
New	HCPCS - PATH & LAB	C9803	3/1/2020	Hospital outpatient clinic visit specimen collection

\*Or can use CPT 87635 for standard reporting for COVID-19 PCR DNA or RNA amplified tests.

- Below are the codes to report and track COVID-19 Serology test:
  - CPT 86328-immunoassay for infectious agent antibodies, single step method.
  - CPT 86769-antibody test.



## Additional Questions regarding COVID-19 Testing, Billing, and Coverage



### Testing and specimen collection:

- COVID-19 testing is currently available for many primary care providers, specialists, urgent care, and emergency room venues and required by L.A. County DPH's Health Officer Order<sup>17</sup>, but it is possible that not all providers or health care settings are able to provide COVID-19 testing .
  - If a person's primary care provider, specialists and/or urgent care is not available to provide COVID-19 PCR test, and the member meets the specifications detailed by the County of Los Angeles, COVID-19 PCR testing can be done at one of the L.A. County sponsored COVID-19 testing sites. For more information, the testing information and instructions can be accessed via: <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing/>
    - In certain settings (such as the L.A. City/County test sanctioned test sites or certain long term care facilities with established protocols), a member does not need a physician or licensed provider to get a COVID-19 PCR test.
- Currently, there is no clear guidance on the frequency of diagnostic PCR and Serology testing. The frequency of the testing should be made by a medical professional and dependent on certain circumstance such as exposure to a person who is COVID-19 positive or when outbreaks occur.
- COVID-19 Specimen collection is a new Medi-Cal benefit.
  - **Laboratory Specimen Collection:**
    - **G2023**, specimen collection for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19]).
    - **G2024**, specimen collection for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19]), from an individual in a skilled nursing facility or by a laboratory on behalf of a home health agency.
  - **Practitioner Payment for Specimen Collection:**
    - Practitioners can be paid for assessment and specimen collection for COVID-19 testing using the level 1 evaluation and management code **CPT code 99211**. In light of the public health emergency, Medicare and Medi-Cal will recognize this code to be billed for all patients, not just established patients if it is for a potential COVID-19 related visit.

### BILLING/REIMBURSEMENT:

- Providers (licensed health providers, specimen collectors, and laboratories) should not balance bill any L.A. Care members. Providers should direct their COVID-19 bills to either L.A. Care or its delegates.
- L.A. Care and delegates will pay the specimen collector and laboratory for its members even if the specimen collector and/or laboratory is not contracted with L.A. Care and/or its delegates.
- At this time, L.A. Care or its delegates will not reimburse L.A. Care members who pay for a COVID-19 test out-of-pocket.
- For more information regarding Medi-Cal Reimbursement for Clinical Laboratory Services Related to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, please visit: <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/COVID-19/COVID-Guidance-Notice.pdf>



**COVERAGE:**

- For guidance regarding the submission of claims to L.A. Care, please visit:  
<http://www.lacare.org/providers/claims-edi/submitting-claim>

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

- Should you have any questions and/or concerns, or if you are unable to comply with this guidance, please contact your designated Delegation Oversight Account Manager.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html> (Last Updated 6/24/2020)

<sup>2</sup> <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/nCorona2019/test.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [DMHC APL 20-006](#) (Issued 3/5/2020)

<sup>4</sup> [UPDATED COVID-19 Screening and Testing](#) (Revised 3/16/2020)

<sup>5</sup> [HPMS Memo: Information Related to Coronavirus Disease 2019 – COVID-19](#) (Last Updated 4/23/2020)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/emergency-situations-medical-devices/eua-authorized-serology-test-performance> (Last Updated 6/4/2020)

<sup>7</sup> <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/332/2020/05/Serology-Testing-Indications-5-5-2020.pdf>  
(Released 5/5/2020)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/resources/antibody-tests-guidelines.html> (Last Updated 5/23/2020)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.dmhc.ca.gov/Portals/0/Docs/DO/DMHC-FAQ-ForCOVID.pdf> (Issued 5/22/2020)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/COVID-19/COVID-19-Emergency-Services.pdf> (Issued 4/8/2020)

<sup>11</sup> [DHCS Newsflash: New CPT Codes for COVID-19 Anti-body Testing](#) (Released 4/17/2020)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/FFCRA-Part-43-FAQs.pdf> (Released 6/23/2020)

<sup>13</sup> [DHCS Newsflash: COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing CPT and HCPCS Codes Updated](#) (Released 5/6/2020)

<sup>14</sup> [Medicare Administrative Contractor COVID-19 Test Pricing](#) (Issued 3/12/2020)

<sup>15</sup> [DHCS Newsflash: Updated Rate for New COVID-19 Diagnostic Testing CPT Code 87635](#) (Released 4/8/2020)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-05/cpt-reporting-covid-19-testing.pdf> (Last Updated 5/6/2020)

<sup>17</sup> [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/HOO/HOO\\_DiagnosticTesting\\_HealthcareFacilities.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/HOO/HOO_DiagnosticTesting_HealthcareFacilities.pdf)  
(Issued 7/8/2020)