

## AMA announces expedited updates to CPT for COVID-19 antibody tests

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CHICAGO - The American Medical Association (AMA) today announced updates to Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), that include two code additions intended to report when patients receive blood tests that detect COVID-19 antibodies.

The updates were approved this evening during a special meeting of the CPT Editorial Panel, the independent body convened by the AMA with sole authority to expedite the review of proposed changes and additions to the CPT code set.

“Antibody testing that identifies patients that have been exposed to the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and developed an immune response is likely to have important public health implications by providing a clearer picture of the prevalence of the disease in the U.S.,” said AMA President Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A. “The expedited approval of new CPT codes for COVID-19 antibody tests is an important step that enhances the reporting of innovative tools now available to advance medicine’s overarching goals of reducing the COVID-19 disease burden, improving health outcomes and reducing long-term care costs.”

The new codes are intended for use as the industry standard for accurate reporting and tracking of blood tests performed to specifically detect antibodies associated with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. These two new codes are effective immediately.

Code 86328 was established for antibody tests using a single step method immunoassay. This testing method typically includes a strip with all of the critical components for the assay and is appropriate for a point of care platform. Code 86769 was established for antibody tests using a multiple step method.

For quick reference, the new Category I CPT codes and long descriptors are:

- 86328 Immunoassay for infectious agent antibody(ies), qualitative or semiquantitative, single step method (eg, reagent strip); severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19])
- 86769 Antibody; severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19])

In addition to the long descriptors, short and medium descriptors can be accessed on the [AMA website](#).

The new updates are the latest edits to CPT since March 13, 2020 when the CPT Editorial Panel approved a new code to report molecular testing to detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

- 87635 Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Coronavirus disease [COVID-19]), amplified probe technique

Development, review and approval of the new CPT code involved broad input from practicing physicians, commercial laboratories, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other experts.

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