

# Allergy Testing

CPT: 86003

## CMS Policy for California, Hawaii, and Nevada

Local policies are determined by the performing test location. This is determined by the state in which your performing laboratory resides and where your testing is commonly performed.

Medically Supportive  
ICD Codes are listed  
on subsequent page(s)  
of this document.

## Coverage Indications, Limitations, and/or Medical Necessity

Allergy refers to conditions in which immune responses to environmental antigens cause tissue inflammation and organ dysfunction. Allergy testing is performed to determine immunologic sensitivity or reaction to antigens for the purpose of identifying the cause of the allergic state. This policy addresses immediate (IgE-mediated) hypersensitivity and delayed (cell mediated) hypersensitivity. In vivo allergy sensitivity testing correlates the performance and evaluation of selective cutaneous and mucous membrane tests with the patient's history, physical examination, and other observations. Immediate hypersensitivity may also be tested in vitro by measurement of allergen-specific serum IgE. Under certain limited conditions, this is covered by Medicare Part B. Immediate hypersensitivity skin testing is important in the diagnosis of IgE mediated inhalant, food, venom; and penicillin allergies, delayed hypersensitivity testing is more often helpful in the diagnosis of contact dermatitis and the clinical evaluation of cell-mediated immunity.

## Indications

Allergy testing is allowed when it has proven efficacy as demonstrated through scientifically valid peer reviewed published medical studies.

- A complete medical and immunologic history and appropriate physical examination must be done prior to performing diagnostic testing.
- The testing must be performed based on this history and a physical exam, which documents that the antigen being used for testing exists with a reasonable probability of exposure in the patient's environment.
- It would not be expected that all patients would receive the same tests or the same number of sensitivity tests. The number of tests performed must be judicious and related to the history, physical findings, and clinical judgment specific to each individual.

## General Information

In vivo immunologic tests have been shown to be reliable and valid diagnostic tools and include skin tests with standardized allergenic extracts by prick, puncture, and intradermal techniques, skin end-point titration, and patch testing.

- **Percutaneous Testing** remains the test of choice in most clinical situations where immediate hypersensitivity reactions are suspected. Percutaneous tests require medical supervision, since there is a small but significant risk of anaphylaxis. Overall, skin testing is quick, safe, and cost-effective.
- **Intracutaneous/Intradermal Tests** are usually performed when increased sensitivity is the main goal such as when percutaneous tests (CPT codes 95004 or 95017) are negative and there is a strong suspicion of allergen sensitivity. The usual testing program may include 2 concentrations of an extract: a weaker concentration and a stronger concentration. It would not be expected that 3 or more concentrations of one extract would be medically necessary.
- **Skin End Point Titration Testing** analyzes the highest dilution of a substance that produces a reaction, and may be used to determine the starting dose(s) of allergen immunotherapy.
- **Delayed Hypersensitivity Skin Testing** has been commonly used in three ways: anergy testing, testing for infection with intracellular pathogens, and testing for sensitivity to contact allergens. Accurate testing for contact allergy requires careful attention to technique, and limitation of testing to the specific allergens known to be associated with a contact reaction.

Visit [QuestDiagnostics.com/MLCP](https://www.questdiagnostics.com/MLCP) to view current limited coverage tests, reference guides, and policy information.

To view the complete policy and the full list of medically supportive codes, please refer to the CMS website reference

[www.cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov)

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## CMS Policy for California, Hawaii, and Nevada (continued)

- **Photo Testing** is skin irradiation with a specific range of ultraviolet light. Photo tests are performed for the evaluation of photosensitivity disorders.
- **Patch Testing** is indicated to evaluate a nonspecific dermatitis, allergic contact dermatitis, pruritus, and other dermatitis to determine the causative antigen.
- **Photo Patch Testing** uses two patches, with one of them being irradiated with ultraviolet light half way through the occlusive period. It is indicated to evaluate unique allergies resulting from light exposure.
- **Ophthalmic Mucous Membrane Tests and Direct Nasal Mucous Membrane Tests** are rarely indicated. They are allowed when skin testing cannot test allergens.
- **Inhalation Bronchial Challenge Testing** involves the inhalation of agents that can trigger respiratory responses. The agents include drugs that cause airway constriction, antigens and chemical sensitizers usually related to occupational breathing problems. Pulmonary function studies are not included in the bronchial challenge test. Generally three measures of each determination (e.g., spirometry, prolonged post exposure evaluation of bronchospasm) are performed. The best of the three is accepted and represents one unit of service. A unit is defined as each set of three measurements.
- **Ingestion Challenge Test** involves the administration of sequentially or incrementally larger doses of the test item. The test items may include food or antibiotics. The service is allowed once per patient encounter, regardless of the number of items tested, and includes evaluation of the patient's response to the test items.

### Limitations

- **Ingestion challenge food testing** performed by the patient in the home, and not in the office setting, will not be covered.
- **Provocative testing** will be denied as not medically necessary.
- **Quantitative or semi-quantitative in vitro allergen specific IgE testing** (CPT code 86003) is covered under conditions where skin testing is not possible or is not reliable. In vitro testing is covered as a SUBSTITUTE for skin testing; it is usually not necessary in addition to skin testing. The number of tests done, frequency of retesting and other coverage issues, are the same as for skin testing. The indications for using in vitro testing instead of in vivo methods must be documented with the claim.
- **Qualitative multiallergen screens for allergen specific IgE** (CPT code 86005) have insufficient literature to support clear-cut clinical utility and will be denied as not medically necessary.

Examples of indications for in vitro testing include the following:

- Patients with severe dermatographism, ichthyosis or generalized eczema;
- Patients at increased risk for anaphylactic response to skin testing based on clinical history (e.g., when an unusual allergen is not available as a licensed skin test extract);
- Patients unable to discontinue long-acting antihistamines, tricyclic antidepressants, or medications that may put the patient at undue risk if they are discontinued long enough to perform skin tests;
- Patients with mental or physical impairments, who are uncooperative; or
- Evaluation of cross-reactivity between insect venoms.

**The following are noncovered antigens:** newsprint, tobacco smoke, dandelion, orris root, phenol, alcohol, sugar, yeast, grain mill dust, soybean dust (except when the patient has a known exposure to soybean dust such as a food processing plant), honeysuckle, fiberglass, green tea, or chalk.

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Please refer to the [Limitations or Utilization Guidelines](#) section on previous page(s) for frequency information.

The ICD10 codes listed below are the top diagnosis codes currently utilized by ordering physicians for the limited coverage test highlighted above that are also listed as medically supportive under Medicare's limited coverage policy. **If you are ordering this test for diagnostic reasons that are not covered under Medicare policy, an Advance Beneficiary Notice form is required.**

Code	Description
H10.45	Other chronic allergic conjunctivitis
J30.1	Allergic rhinitis due to pollen
J30.2	Other seasonal allergic rhinitis
J30.5	Allergic rhinitis due to food
J30.81	Allergic rhinitis due to animal (cat) (dog) hair and dander
J30.89	Other allergic rhinitis
J31.0	Chronic rhinitis
J45.20	Mild intermittent asthma, uncomplicated
J45.30	Mild persistent asthma, uncomplicated
J45.40	Moderate persistent asthma, uncomplicated
J45.909	Unspecified asthma, uncomplicated
L20.89	Other atopic dermatitis
L50.0	Allergic urticaria
L50.9	Urticaria, unspecified
R05.3	Chronic cough
R05.9	Cough, unspecified
R06.02	Shortness of breath
R06.2	Wheezing
R09.81	Nasal congestion
R21	Rash and other nonspecific skin eruption

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### Disclaimer:

This diagnosis code reference guide is provided as an aid to physicians and office staff in determining when an ABN (Advance Beneficiary Notice) is necessary. Diagnosis codes must be applicable to the patient's symptoms or conditions and must be consistent with documentation in the patient's medical record. Quest Diagnostics does not recommend any diagnosis codes and will only submit diagnosis information provided to us by the ordering physician or his/her designated staff. The CPT codes provided are based on AMA guidelines and are for informational purposes only. CPT coding is the sole responsibility of the billing party. Please direct any questions regarding coding to the payer being billed.

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