

Z-Code requirements for molecular diagnostic testing

Frequently asked questions

Overview

UnitedHealthcare requires health care providers to submit the DEX Z-Code along with the CPT® code for molecular diagnostic test services in Medicare Advantage claims. This applies to both facility and professional claims and all states.

How long does it take to receive a DEX Z-Code when registering a test with the DEX Diagnostics Exchange (DEX)?

Within 2 weeks of adding your test into the DEX Registry, we'll assign a Z-Code to your test(s). You'll receive an email notification with your assigned Z-Code(s) once complete. If the DEX team has questions regarding your test submission, we'll contact you for additional information.

The assigned Z-Code is not effective for claims until the DEX clinical team has reviewed your test application and assigned a CPT code. First, each laboratory must register their organization. Then, they must register each unique test in the DEX system. After a Z-Code is assigned to a test, the DEX team will review the application and assign a CPT code. For more details on the registration timeline, refer to [DEX Diagnostics Exchange](#).

How do I register DEX Z-Codes for custom panels?

Labs must register all components of a panel, whether they are in-scope or out-of-scope of the program. DEX will map only the tests that are in scope (e.g., EGFR by molecular methodology, ROS1, and ALK by IHC). For detailed submission instructions, visit [DEX Diagnostics Exchange Registry](#) or contact DEX customer service at DEX.customer.service@palmettogba.com.

If we use a reference lab for a particular test, how do we register our DEX Z-Code identifier?

Both labs must register as an organization in DEX. The performing lab submits test details to receive the Z-Code. If you send your test to a reference lab, request 'sharing' in DEX to access the Z-Code. The billing lab uses the performing lab's Z-Code. Labs link up in DEX with a Sharing Request. Z-Codes are only requested for tests performed in-house.

How do I register a test that's performed at 2 different locations in the DEX Diagnostic Exchange?

If the test process is standardized and the same method is used at both locations, labs only need to submit 1 application. If the method differs, each location must submit an application.

Is the DEX Z-Code identifier the same as the genetic test registry (GTR) identification (ID) from the National Institute of Health (NIH)?

No. The GTR ID is created when labs register tests with the NIH GTR. For detailed submission instructions, see [The GTR Submission Process](#) or contact gtr@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.

Do I need the DEX Z-Code for reimbursement?

Yes. When you report molecular diagnostic tests (MDTs), you are required to submit a DEX Z-Code identifier with the claim.

Where do I submit the DEX Z-Code identifier on the claim?

For professional lab services, submit the DEX Z-Code before the decimal in field 2400 SV-101-7 on electronic claims or in the shaded area of box 19 on paper claims. For facility lab services, use line SV202-7 for electronic claims or block 80 for paper claims.

Do I need a DEX Z-Code for all genetic tests?

Visit [Palmetto GBA](#) or [Billing and Coding: DEX MDT](#) for a list of diagnostic services requiring DEX.

Can labs bill multiple CPT codes for 1 assay?

No, labs should use 1 CPT code for each clinical test, even if the test involves multiple components to produce a single result.

Does UnitedHealthcare require the prior authorization to pay a claim?

No. Prior authorization is not required for UnitedHealthcare Medicare Advantage claims.

Does the test fall within a Medicare benefit category?

DEX reviews test registration applications and technical assessments (TA) to help ensure each test meets Medicare criteria. Covered tests are listed in the [Molecular Diagnostic Test policy](#) on the CMS website. Coding and billing guidelines are available to help with reimbursement.

Will UnitedHealthcare pay for test services done before the technical assessment approval date?

Do not submit claims for tests in the technical assessment process until a decision is determined. Refer to [Palmetto tech assessment guidelines](#) for more details.

Questions?

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- Contact the Smart Edits Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Support Team at supportEDI@uhc.com or call **800-842-1109**
- For coding help, email the Provider Education Team at CodeChat@optum.com or education.info@optum.com