

5.6.1.4 Preproduction Releases

Prior to the release of a SNOMED CT Edition it is strongly recommended that an alpha and/or beta version of the edition is created and released. This will give stakeholders an opportunity to test the edition, gain an understanding of any impact to their local systems, and identify potential errors that need correction.

Alpha Release Package

A SNOMED CT release package made available only for initial review and testing by implementers and other stakeholders.

Notes

- An *alpha release package* must not be used in production clinical systems or in clinical settings. This includes [Affiliate Licensees](#) or any third parties, except those who have formally committed to test it.
- An *alpha release* is used to test the format and content of the [SNOMED CT release](#). Feedback is elicited and changes are made prior to publication of the [beta release](#).
- *Alpha releases* were formerly known as a [technology preview](#) releases.

Beta Release Package

A SNOMED CT release package made available for review and testing only.

Notes

- Implementers and other stakeholders review and test the *beta release*.
- The *beta release package* is made available prior to the [production release](#). It must not be used in production clinical systems or in clinical settings. This includes [Affiliate Licensees](#) or any third parties, except those who have formally committed to test it.
- The *beta release* status indicates it is expected to subsequently be confirmed as a [production release](#). If there is significant issue in format or content, it may be withdrawn, or replaced with an updated *beta release package*. Whether or not it becomes a [production release](#) is decided shortly before the due date for the next release. If a *beta release* is subsequently confirmed as a [production release](#), all updates are fully version-tracked from the date of the *beta release*.
- Beta releases were formerly known as [candidate baseline](#) releases.

A beta release of an extension functions as a candidate baseline until the extension is considered mature and ready for publication. The duration of a preproduction release period can be as long as is required to ensure that the version that is finally published is as robust and error-free as possible. Extension producers should utilize the option of distributing preproduction releases to get feedback from relevant stakeholders on the content of the extension. This is particularly important because SNOMED CT's robust versioning mechanism means that any content that is officially published by an extension producer must be maintained indefinitely. Errors identified and corrected in an alpha or beta release can be fixed without requiring an ongoing history to be maintained. In contrast, errors identified in a published release must be traceable and made permanently available in the full history of the edition.