

Clinical Policy: Influenza and Streptococcus Group A Testing

Reference Number: CP.MP.112

Effective Date: 07/16

Last Review Date: 07/16

[Coding Implications](#)

[Revision Log](#)

See [Important Reminder](#) at the end of this policy for important regulatory and legal information.

Description

Influenza and streptococcus group A infections generally present with uniquely different signs and symptoms. Because of the improbability of concurrent streptococcus and influenza infection, and the differences in their clinical presentation, these tests should not be performed at the same visit.

Policy

- I. It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation® that performing influenza testing and streptococcus group A testing is **not medically necessary** when performed during the same visit because of the improbability of concurrently contracting influenza and streptococcus A.
- II. It is the policy of health plans affiliated with Centene Corporation® that performing influenza testing between June 1 and August 31 of each year is **not medically necessary**. Flu season in the United States can happen as early as October and can last as late as May. False-positive influenza test results are more likely to occur when disease prevalence is low ($\leq 10\%$), which is generally at the beginning and end of the season, as well as during summer months.

Background

Clinical research and medical associations consistently suggest that patients with strep throat (streptococcus, group A) present uniquely discrete signs and symptoms inconsistent with influenza. Signs and symptoms of influenza infection can include fever, muscle aches, headache, lack of energy, dry cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, and runny nose. Strep throat symptoms most commonly include sore throat, which usually starts quickly and causes severe pain when swallowing; fever; red and swollen tonsils, possibly with white patches or streaks of pus; tiny red spots on the roof of the mouth; headache; nausea; vomiting; swollen lymph nodes in the front of the neck; and sandpaper-like rash.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that starting antiviral treatment should not wait for laboratory confirmation of influenza. Testing is not needed for all members with signs of influenza prior to making antiviral treatment decisions. Once influenza activity is documented in the geographical area, a clinical diagnosis can be made based on symptoms, especially during peak flu season.

When strep throat is suspected, a positive strep test is needed prior to initiation of antibiotics. If a rapid strep test is negative but strep throat is still suspected, a throat culture swab to confirm a strep infection is required.

CLINICAL POLICY

Influenza and Streptococcus Group A Testing

Coding Implications

This clinical policy references Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®). CPT® is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association. All CPT codes and descriptions are copyrighted 2015, American Medical Association. All rights reserved. CPT codes and CPT descriptions are from the current manuals and those included herein are not intended to be all-inclusive and are included for informational purposes only. Codes referenced in this clinical policy are for informational purposes only. Inclusion or exclusion of any codes does not guarantee coverage. Providers should reference the most up-to-date sources of professional coding guidance prior to the submission of claims for reimbursement of covered services.

CPT® Codes	Description
87502	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); influenza virus, for multiple types of subtypes, includes multiplex reverse transcription, when performed, and multiplex amplified probe technique, first 2 types or sub-types
87651	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); streptococcus, group A, amplified probe technique
87804	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunoassay with direct optical observation; influenza
87880	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunoassay with direct optical observation; streptococcus, group A

Reviews, Revisions, and Approvals	Date	Approval Date
Policy developed	07/16	07/16
Added CPT 87502 and 87651. Removed details about the type of flu and strep testing considered not medically necessary in section I, as this is specified in CPT codes.	11/16	12/16

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Influenza (flu). Accessed 7/20/16. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC Features: Is it strep throat? Accessed 7/20/16. <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/StrepThroat/>

Important Reminder

This clinical policy has been developed by appropriately experienced and licensed health care professionals based on a review and consideration of currently available generally accepted standards of medical practice; peer-reviewed medical literature; government agency/program approval status; evidence-based guidelines and positions of leading national health professional organizations; views of physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas affected by this clinical policy; and other available clinical information. The Health Plan makes no representations and accepts no liability with respect to the content of any external information used or relied upon in developing this clinical policy. This clinical policy is consistent with standards of medical practice current at the time that this clinical policy was approved. “Health Plan” means a health

CLINICAL POLICY

Influenza and Streptococcus Group A Testing

plan that has adopted this clinical policy and that is operated or administered, in whole or in part, by Centene Management Company, LLC, or any of such health plan's affiliates, as applicable.

The purpose of this clinical policy is to provide a guide to medical necessity, which is a component of the guidelines used to assist in making coverage decisions and administering benefits. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee regarding payment or results. Coverage decisions and the administration of benefits are subject to all terms, conditions, exclusions and limitations of the coverage documents (e.g., evidence of coverage, certificate of coverage, policy, contract of insurance, etc.), as well as to state and federal requirements and applicable Health Plan-level administrative policies and procedures.

This clinical policy is effective as of the date determined by the Health Plan. The date of posting may not be the effective date of this clinical policy. This clinical policy may be subject to applicable legal and regulatory requirements relating to provider notification. If there is a discrepancy between the effective date of this clinical policy and any applicable legal or regulatory requirement, the requirements of law and regulation shall govern. The Health Plan retains the right to change, amend or withdraw this clinical policy, and additional clinical policies may be developed and adopted as needed, at any time.

This clinical policy does not constitute medical advice, medical treatment or medical care. It is not intended to dictate to providers how to practice medicine. Providers are expected to exercise professional medical judgment in providing the most appropriate care, and are solely responsible for the medical advice and treatment of members. This clinical policy is not intended to recommend treatment for members. Members should consult with their treating physician in connection with diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Providers referred to in this clinical policy are independent contractors who exercise independent judgment and over whom the Health Plan has no control or right of control. Providers are not agents or employees of the Health Plan.

This clinical policy is the property of the Health Plan. Unauthorized copying, use, and distribution of this clinical policy or any information contained herein are strictly prohibited. Providers, members and their representatives are bound to the terms and conditions expressed herein through the terms of their contracts. Where no such contract exists, providers, members and their representatives agree to be bound by such terms and conditions by providing services to members and/or submitting claims for payment for such services.

Note: For Medicaid members, when state Medicaid coverage provisions conflict with the coverage provisions in this clinical policy, state Medicaid coverage provisions take precedence. Please refer to the state Medicaid manual for any coverage provisions pertaining to this clinical policy.

Note: For Medicare members, to ensure consistency with the Medicare National Coverage Determinations (NCD) and Local Coverage Determinations (LCD), all applicable NCDs, LCDs, and Medicare Coverage Articles should be reviewed prior to applying the criteria set forth in this clinical policy. Refer to the CMS website at <http://www.cms.gov> for additional information.

CLINICAL POLICY
Influenza and Streptococcus Group A Testing



©2016 Centene Corporation. All rights reserved. All materials are exclusively owned by Centene Corporation and are protected by United States copyright law and international copyright law. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, modified, distributed, displayed, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means, or otherwise published without the prior written permission of Centene Corporation. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice contained herein. Centene® and Centene Corporation® are registered trademarks exclusively owned by Centene Corporation.