Harvard Pilgrim Health Care | TUFTS Health Plan

Point32Health companies

Payment Policy:

Laboratory: Diagnostic Testing of Influenza

Effective date: Nov. 1, 2025

Applies to:

Commercial Products

☒ Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Commercial products
☐ Tufts Health Plan Commercial products

Public Plans Products

☐ Tufts Health Direct – A Massachusetts Qualified Health Plan (QHP) (a commercial product)
☐ Tufts Health Together – MassHealth MCO Plan and Accountable Care Partnership Plans
☐ Tufts Health RITogether – A Rhode Island Medicaid Plan
☐ Tufts Health One Care – A dual-eligible product

Senior Products

☐ Tufts Health Plan Senior Care Options (SCO) (a dual-eligible product)
☐ Tufts Medicare Preferred HMO/PPO (Medicare Advantage products)

Policy

Influenza is an acute respiratory illness caused by influenza A or B viruses resulting in upper and lower respiratory tract infection, fever, malaise, headache, and weakness. It mainly occurs in outbreaks and epidemics during the winter season and is associated with increased morbidity and mortality in certain high-risk populations.

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) refer to clinical laboratory improvement amendments (CLIA) waived immunoassays that can detect influenza viruses during the outpatient visit, giving results in a clinically relevant time period to inform treatment decisions . Besides RIDTs, influenza can be detected using polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based assays as well as culture testing; however, the former is not often used in initial clinical management due to time constraints. Serologic testing is not used in outpatient settings for diagnosis .

Indications and/or Limitations of Coverage

Application of coverage criteria is dependent upon an individual's benefit coverage at the time of the request.

1. For symptomatic individuals (see Note 1), one, (see Note 2) but not both, of the following **MEETS COVERAGE CRITERIA**:
   a. One single rapid flu test (either a point-of-care rapid nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) or a rapid antigen test).
   b. One single traditional NAAT.
2. Viral culture testing for influenza **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
3. For asymptomatic individuals, influenza testing (e.g., rapid antigen flu tests, rapid NAAT or RT-PCR tests, traditional RT-PCR tests, viral culture testing) **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
4. Serology testing for influenza **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA**.

NOTES:

Note 1: Typical Influenza Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills:
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Headaches, muscle, or body aches
  - Fatigue
  - Runny or stuffy nose
  - Vomiting and/or diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

Note 2: One influenza test may detect influenza A and/or influenza B. When both influenza A and influenza B are detected by a test represented by CPT codes 87400, 87501, or 87804, up to two units may be billed at a single visit.

Applicable CPT/HCPCS Procedure Codes

Procedure codes appearing in policy documents are included only as a general reference tool for each policy. They may not be all-inclusive.

Coding

Code	Description
86710	Antibody; influenza virus
87254	Virus isolation; centrifuge enhanced (shell vial) technique, includes identification with immunofluorescence stain, each virus
87275	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunofluorescent technique; influenza B virus
87276	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunofluorescent technique; influenza A virus
87400	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunoassay technique, (e.g., enzyme immunoassay [EIA], enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay [ELISA], fluorescence immunoassay [FIA], immunochemiluminometric assay [IMCA]) qualitative or semiquantitative; Influenza, A or B, each
87501	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); influenza virus, includes reverse transcription, when performed, and amplified probe technique, each type or subtype
87502	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); influenza virus, for multiple types or sub-types, includes multiplex reverse transcription, when performed, and multiplex amplified probe technique, first 2 types or sub-types
87503	Infectious agent detection by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA); influenza virus, for multiple types or sub-types, includes multiplex reverse transcription, when performed, and multiplex amplified probe technique, each additional influenza virus type or sub-type beyond 2 (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure)
87804	Infectious agent antigen detection by immunoassay with direct optical (i.e., visual) observation; Influenza

Evidence-based Scientific References

1. Dolin R. Seasonal influenza in adults: Clinical manifestations and diagnosis. Updated April 2, 2025. https://www.uptodate.com/contents/seasonal-influenza-in-adults-clinical-manifestations-and-diagnosis
2. CDC. Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests. Updated September 17, 2024. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/hcp/testing-methods/clinician_guidance_ridt.html
3. CDC. Signs and Symptoms of Flu. Updated August 24, 2024. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/signs-symptoms/index.html
5. Dolin R. Influenza: current concepts. American family physician. 1976;14(3):72-7. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/961563/
6. Loeb M, Singh PK, Fox J, et al. Longitudinal study of influenza molecular viral shedding in Hutterite communities. The Journal of infectious diseases. Oct 01 2012;206(7):1078-84. doi:10.1093/infdis/jis450
7. Kilbourne ED, Loge JP. Influenza A prime: a clinical study of an epidemic caused by a new strain of virus. Annals of internal medicine. Aug 1950;33(2):371-9. doi:10.7326/0003-4819-33-2-371
8. Nicholson KG. Clinical features of influenza. Seminars in respiratory infections. 1992;7(1):26-37. Accessed Mar. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1609165/
9. Brankston G, Gitterman L, Hirji Z, Lemieux C, Gardam M. Transmission of influenza A in human beings. The Lancet Infectious diseases. Apr 2007;7(4):257-65. doi:10.1016/s1473-3099(07)70029-4
10. Mubareka S, Lowen AC, Steel J, Coates AL, Garcia-Sastre A, Palese P. Transmission of influenza virus via aerosols and fomites in the guinea pig model. The Journal of infectious diseases. Mar 15 2009;199(6):858-65. doi:10.1086/597073
11. Cox NJ, Subbarao K. Influenza. Lancet (London, England). Oct 09 1999;354(9186):1277-82. doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(99)01241-6
12. Cowling BJ, Chan KH, Fang VJ, et al. Comparative epidemiology of pandemic and seasonal influenza A in households. The New England journal of medicine. Jun 10 2010;362(23):2175-84. doi:10.1056/NEJMoa0911530
13. Zachary KC. Seasonal influenza in nonpregnant adults: Treatment. Updated May 6, 2025. https://www.uptodate.com/contents/seasonal-influenza-in-nonpregnant-adults-treatment
14. Cooper NJ, Sutton AJ, Abrams KR, Wailoo A, Turner D, Nicholson KG. Effectiveness of neuraminidase inhibitors in treatment and prevention of influenza A and B: systematic review and meta-analyses of randomised controlled trials. BMJ (Clinical research ed). Jun 07 2003;326(7401):1235. doi:10.1136/bmj.326.7401.1235
15. Hayden FG, Osterhaus AD, Treanor JJ, et al. Efficacy and safety of the neuraminidase inhibitor zanamivir in the treatment of influenzavirus infections. GG167 Influenza Study Group. The New England journal of medicine. Sep 25 1997;337(13):874-80. doi:10.1056/nejm199709253371302

16. Nicholson KG, Aoki FY, Osterhaus AD, et al. Efficacy and safety of oseltamivir in treatment of acute influenza: a randomised controlled trial. Neuraminidase Inhibitor Flu Treatment Investigator Group. Lancet (London, England). May 27 2000;355(9218):1845-50. doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(00)02288-1
17. Dobson J, Whitley RJ, Pocock S, Monto AS. Oseltamivir treatment for influenza in adults: a meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials. Lancet (London, England). May 02 2015;385(9979):1729-37. doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(14)62449-1
18. Heneghan CJ, Onakpoya I, Thompson M, Spencer EA, Jones M, Jefferson T. Zanamivir for influenza in adults and children: systematic review of clinical study reports and summary of regulatory comments. BMJ (Clinical research ed). Apr 09 2014;348:g2547. doi:10.1136/bmj.g2547
19. Jefferson T, Jones M, Doshi P, Spencer EA, Onakpoya I, Heneghan CJ. Oseltamivir for influenza in adults and children: systematic review of clinical study reports and summary of regulatory comments. BMJ (Clinical research ed). Apr 09 2014;348:g2545. doi:10.1136/bmj.g2545
20. Harper SA, Bradley JS, Englund JA, et al. Seasonal influenza in adults and children--diagnosis, treatment, chemoprophylaxis, and institutional outbreak management: clinical practice guidelines of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Clinical infectious diseases : an official publication of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Apr 15 2009;48(8):1003-32. doi:10.1086/598513
21. Hurt AC, Alexander R, Hibbert J, Deed N, Barr IG. Performance of six influenza rapid tests in detecting human influenza in clinical specimens. Journal of clinical virology : the official publication of the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology. Jun 2007;39(2):132-5. doi:10.1016/j.jcv.2007.03.002
22. Ikenaga M, Kosowska-Shick K, Gotoh K, et al. Genotypes of macrolide-resistant pneumococci from children in southwestern Japan: raised incidence of strains that have both erm(B) and mef(A) with serotype 6B clones. Diagnostic microbiology and infectious disease. Sep 2008;62(1):16-22. doi:10.1016/j.diagmicrobio.2007.10.013
23. Chartrand C, Leeflang MM, Minion J, Brewer T, Pai M. Accuracy of rapid influenza diagnostic tests: a meta-analysis. Annals of internal medicine. Apr 03 2012;156(7):500-11. doi:10.7326/0003-4819-156-7-201204030-00403
24. Sintchenko V, Gilbert GL, Coiera E, Dwyer D. Treat or test first? Decision analysis of empirical antiviral treatment of influenza virus infection versus treatment based on rapid test results. Journal of clinical virology : the official publication of the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology. Jul 2002;25(1):15-21. doi:10.1016/s1386-6532(00)00182-7
25. Call SA, Vollenweider MA, Hornung CA, Simel DL, McKinney WP. Does this patient have influenza? Jama. Feb 23 2005;293(8):987-97. doi:10.1001/jama.293.8.987
26. Lopez Roa P, Catalan P, Giannella M, Garcia de Viedma D, Sandonis V, Bouza E. Comparison of real-time RT-PCR, shell vial culture, and conventional cell culture for the detection of the pandemic influenza A (H1N1) in hospitalized patients. Diagnostic microbiology and infectious disease. Apr 2011;69(4):428-31. doi:10.1016/j.diagmicrobio.2010.11.007
27. Yoon J, Yun SG, Nam J, Choi SH, Lim CS. The use of saliva specimens for detection of influenza A and B viruses by rapid influenza diagnostic tests. Journal of virological methods. May 2017;243:15-19. doi:10.1016/j.jviromet.2017.01.013
28. Ryu SW, Lee JH, Kim J, et al. Comparison of two new generation influenza rapid diagnostic tests with instrument-based digital readout systems for influenza virus detection. British journal of biomedical science. Jul 2016;7Society for Clinical Virology. Jun 2016;79:12-17. doi:10.1016/j.jcv.2016.03.022
29. Young S, Illescas P, Nicasio J, Sickler JJ. Diagnostic accuracy of the real-time PCR cobas((R)) Liat((R)) Influenza A/B assay and the Alere i Influenza A&B NEAR isothermal nucleic acid amplification assay for the detection of influenza using adult nasopharyngeal specimens. Journal of clinical virology : the official publication of the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology. Sep 2017;94:86-90. doi:10.1016/j.jcv.2017.07.012
30. Melchers WJG, Kuijpers J, Sickler JJ, Rahamat-Langendoen J. Lab-in-a-tube: Real-time molecular point-of-care diagnostics for influenza A and B using the cobas(R) Liat(R) system. Journal of medical virology. Aug 2017;89(8):1382-1386. doi:10.1002/jmv.24796
31. Ling L, Kaplan SE, Lopez JC, Stiles J, Lu X, Tang YW. Parallel Validation of Three Molecular Devices for Simultaneous Detection and Identification of Influenza A and B and Respiratory Syncytial Viruses. Journal of clinical microbiology. Mar 2018;56(3)doi:10.1128/jcm.01691-17
32. Antoniol S, Fidouh N, Ghazali A, et al. Diagnostic performances of the Xpert(®) Flu PCR test and the OSOM(®) immunochromatographic rapid test for influenza A and B virus among adult patients in the Emergency Department. Journal of clinical virology : the official publication of the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology. Feb-Mar 2018;99-100:5-9. doi:10.1016/j.jcv.2017.12.005
33. Lee JJ, Verbakel JY, Goyder CR, et al. The Clinical Utility of Point-of-Care Tests for Influenza in Ambulatory Care: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. Clinical infectious diseases : an official publication of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Jun 18 2019;69(1):24-33. doi:10.1093/cid/ciy837
34. Kanwar N, Michael J, Doran K, Montgomery E, Selvarangan R. Comparison of the ID Now Influenza A & B 2, Cobas Influenza A/B, and Xpert Xpress Flu Point-of-Care Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests for Influenza A/B Virus Detection in Children. Journal of clinical microbiology. Feb 24 2020;58(3)doi:10.1128/jcm.01611-19
35. Sato Y, Nirasawa S, Saeki M, et al. Comparative study of rapid antigen testing and two nucleic acid amplification tests for influenza virus detection. J Infect Chemother. Jul 2022;28(7):1033-1036. doi:10.1016/j.jiac.2022.04.009
36. Ferrani S, Prazuck T, Béchet S, Lesne F, Cohen R, Levy C. Diagnostic accuracy of a rapid antigen triple test (SARS-CoV-2, respiratory syncytial virus, and influenza) using anterior nasal swabs versus multiplex RT-PCR in children in an emergency department. Infect Dis Now. Oct 2023;53(7):104769. doi:10.1016/j.idnow.2023.104769

37. CDC. Guide for considering influenza testing when influenza viruses are circulating in the community. Updated November 24, 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/hcp/testing-methods/consider-influenza-testing.html
38. CDC. Influenza virus testing in investigational outbreaks in institutional or other closed settings. Updated March 4, 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/hcp/testing-methods/guide-virus-diagnostic-tests.html
39. Uyeki TM, Bernstein HH, Bradley JS, et al. Clinical Practice Guidelines by the Infectious Diseases Society of America: 2018 Update on Diagnosis, Treatment, Chemoprophylaxis, and Institutional Outbreak Management of Seasonal Influenzaa. Clinical Infectious Diseases. 2018;68(6):e1-e47. doi:10.1093/cid/ciy866
40. Miller JM, Binnicker MJ, Campbell S, et al. A Guide to Utilization of the Microbiology Laboratory for Diagnosis of Infectious Diseases: 2018 Update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the American Society for Microbiologya. Clinical Infectious Diseases. 2018:ciy381-ciy381. doi:10.1093/cid/ciy381
41. Miller JM, Binnicker MJ, Campbell S, et al. Guide to Utilization of the Microbiology Laboratory for Diagnosis of Infectious Diseases: 2024 Update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and the American Society for Microbiology (ASM). Clinical infectious diseases : an official publication of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Mar 5 2024;doi:10.1093/cid/ciae104
42. Abraham MK, Perkins J, Vilke GM, Coyne CJ. Influenza in the Emergency Department: Vaccination, Diagnosis, and Treatment: Clinical Practice Paper Approved by American Academy of Emergency Medicine Clinical Guidelines Committee. The Journal of emergency medicine. Mar 2016;50(3):536-42. doi:10.1016/j.jemermed.2015.10.013
43. AAP. Red Book® 2024-2027: Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 33rd Edition. 2024;doi:10.1542/9781610027373
44. Committee On Infectious Diseases. Recommendations for Prevention and Control of Influenza in Children, 2023-2024. Pediatrics. Oct 1 2023;152(4)doi:10.1542/peds.2023-063772
45. NIH. Influenza Diagnosis. Updated April 10, 2017. https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/influenza-diagnosis
46. ACOG. Influenza in Pregnancy: Prevention and Treatment. Updated February 2024. https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-statement/articles/2024/02/influenza-in-pregnancy-prevention-and-treatment
47. Kux L. Microbiology Devices; Reclassification of Influenza Virus Antigen Detection Test Systems Intended for Use Directly With Clinical Specimens. Federal Register; 2017;82(8):3609-19. https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2017-01-12/pdf/2017-00199.pdf
48. Azar MM, Landry ML. Detection of Influenza A and B Viruses and Respiratory Syncytial Virus by Use of Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA)-Waived Point-of-Care Assays: a Paradigm Shift to Molecular Tests. Journal of clinical microbiology. Jul 2018;56(7)doi:10.1128/jcm.00367-18
49. CMS. Tests Granted Waived Status Under CLIA. https://www.cdc.gov/clia/docs/tests-granted-waived-status-under-clia.pdf

Publication History

03/01/2026”	Annual review; administrative edits; removed 87631
09/01/2025:	Policy created to support coverage guidelines, effective for dates of service beginning Nov. 1, 2025

Background and Disclaimer Information

This policy applies to the products of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Tufts Health Plan and their affiliates, as identified in the check boxes on the first page for services performed by contracted providers.

Payment is based on member benefits and eligibility on the date of service, medical necessity review, where applicable, and the provider’s network participation agreement with the Plan. As every claim is unique, this policy is neither a guarantee of payment, nor a final indication of how specific claim(s) will be adjudicated. Claims payment is subject to member eligibility and benefits on the date of service, coordination of benefits, referral/authorization, and utilization management requirements (when applicable), adherence to Plan policies and procedures, and claims editing logic. An authorization is not a guarantee of payment.

Point32Health reserves the right to amend a payment policy at its discretion. CPT and HCPCS codes are updated as applicable; please adhere to the most recent CPT and HCPCS coding guidelines.

We reserve the right to conduct audits on any provider and/or facility to ensure accuracy and compliance with the guidelines stated in this payment policy. If such an audit determines that a provider/facility did not comply with this payment policy, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Tufts Health Plan will expect the provider/facility to refund all payments related to noncompliance.