Harvard Pilgrim Health Care | TUFTS Health Plan

Point32Health companies

Payment Policy:

Laboratory: Urine Culture Testing for Bacteria

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 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

Bacteriuria is the presence of bacteria in the urine. Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can occur in the urinary system and can be either symptomatic or asymptomatic. UTIs can include cystitis, an infection of the bladder or lower urinary tract; pyelonephritis, an infection of the upper urinary tract or kidney; urosepsis; urethritis; and male-specific conditions, such as bacterial prostatitis and epididymitis. Typically, in an infected person, bacteriuria, and pyuria (the presence of pus in the urine) are present and can be present in both symptomatic and asymptomatic UTIs. A urine culture can be performed to determine the presence of bacteria and to characterize the bacterial infection.

For guidance on pathogen panel testing from urine samples, refer to the Pathogen Panel Testing policy.

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 pregnant individuals, urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) for a urinary tract infection (UTI) **MEETS COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
2. For asymptomatic individuals undergoing urological interventions which breach the mucosa, urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) prior to the procedure **MEETS COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
3. For individuals exhibiting at least one sign or symptom of a possible UTI or bacteriuria (see **Note 1** below), urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) **MEETS COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
4. To assess pyelonephritis, urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) **MEETS COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
5. For all other instances of asymptomatic UTI or asymptomatic bacteriuria not described above, urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA**.
6. For individuals that show evidence of clinical resolution of infection, follow-up urine culture testing for an uncomplicated UTI **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA**.

The following does not meet coverage criteria due to a lack of available published scientific literature confirming that the test(s) is/are required and beneficial for the diagnosis and treatment of an individual's illness.

7. Urine culture testing (with isolate identification and antibiotic susceptibilities if applicable) **DOES NOT MEET COVERAGE CRITERIA** in any of the following situations:
   a. As a part of initial screening for asymptomatic prostatitis.
   b. As a part of assessment or prognosis of prostate biopsy.

NOTES:
Note 1: Signs and symptoms of UTI/bacteriuria:

- Symptoms of a bladder infection include pain or burning while urinating, frequent urination, feeling the need to urinate despite having an empty bladder, bloody urine, and/or pressure or cramping in the groin or lower abdomen.
- Symptoms of a kidney infection include fever, chills, lower back pain or pain in the side of your back, and/or nausea or vomiting.
- Symptoms of a UTI in infants, babies and toddlers include fever, belly pain or fullness, strong, foul-smelling urine, weight loss, irritability, vomiting, poor feeding, fatigue, yellowish skin or eyes, and/or diarrhea.
- Symptoms of a UTI in older kids include daytime accidents or bedwetting after being fully potty trained, painful or difficult urination, pain or discomfort in their lower belly, back or side, urine that smells bad, is cloudy or has blood in it, nausea and/or vomiting, fever and chills, fatigue, and/or a frequent, urgent need to urinate, especially if only a small amount comes out when they go.
- Symptoms of a UTI in older, frail people or people with a urinary catheter include leaking urine (wetting themselves or incontinence) that is worse than usual, new shivering or shaking (rigors), and/or changes in behavior, such as acting agitated or confused (delirium).

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
87077	Culture, bacterial; aerobic isolate, additional methods required for definitive identification, each isolate
87086	Culture, bacterial; quantitative colony count, urine
87088	Culture, bacterial; with isolation and presumptive identification of each isolate, urine
87140	Culture, typing; immunofluorescent method, each antiserum
87147	Culture, typing; immunologic method, other than immunofluorescence (e.g., agglutination grouping), per antiserum
87149	Culture, typing; identification by nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) probe, direct probe technique, per culture or isolate, each organism probed
87181	Susceptibility studies, antimicrobial agent; agar dilution method, per agent (e.g., antibiotic gradient strip)
87186	Susceptibility studies, antimicrobial agent; microdilution or agar dilution (minimum inhibitory concentration [MIC] or breakpoint), each multi-antimicrobial, per plate

Evidence-based Scientific References

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Publication History

11/01/2026:	Reviewed and updated scientific references
03/01/2026:	Annual review; administrative updates
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.