

TEST UPDATE

Group A Strep PCR Changes

UVMMMC

Effective 7/28/25, all UVMHN labs will perform Group A Strep PCR (LAB14535) for the diagnosis of acute pharyngitis caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes*. This test is more sensitive and rapid than routine culture and it should be used to confirm a negative rapid Strep antigen point of care test in pediatric patients.

Most cases of pharyngitis are caused by respiratory viruses and are self-limited. Clinical signs and symptoms should be evaluated to distinguish between a viral infection and Group A Strep. Features that favor viral infection include cough, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis, and coryza. These features may indicate the need for viral testing for SARS-CoV-2 or influenza but only if the patient is at high risk for complications. Features that raise suspicion for Group A Strep include sudden onset sore throat, fever, tonsillar exudates, tonsillopharyngeal and/or uvular edema, cervical lymphadenitis (often tender), and history of Group A Strep exposure.

Rarely, other bacteria such as Group C and G Streptococcus and Arcanobacterium can cause acute pharyngitis. Because infection with these organisms is relatively uncommon and complications are rare, testing is not generally recommended. Therefore, the UVMHN labs will discontinue Group A Strep Culture (LAB502). This culture will become a reflex-only test for Group A Strep PCR (LAB14535) if the PCR test is positive.

Test Build Information:

Group A Strep Culture will no longer be orderable. It will become a reflex-only test.

Updated Orderable (Reflex-Only)	Epic Code	Atlas Code	Mayo Access ID	Order LOINC	CPT Code(s)
Group A Strep Culture	LAB502	THSC	FAH5649	11268-0	87070
Result Component(s)	Epic Code	Atlas Code	Mayo Access ID	Result LOINC	Notes
Group A Strep Culture	1230100018	CULT	FAH4896	41852-5	

There are certain situations in which testing for viable Group A Strep organisms, not just antigen or nucleic acid, is warranted such as persistent infection, recurrent infections in households and chronic carriage. Given this, an Ask at Order Entry (AOE) question has been added to the Group A Strep PCR test asking, "Is this for test of cure or detection of asymptomatic carriage?". If answered as no, only the PCR will be performed. If answered as yes, the PCR will be performed and, if positive, will reflex to culture looking for viable Group A Strep. If the PCR is negative, no further testing is warranted.

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Updated Orderable	Epic Code	Atlas Code	Mayo Access ID	Order LOINC	CPT Code(s)
Group A Strep PCR	LAB14535	STREPPCR	FAH6161	60489-2	87651
Result Component(s)	Epic Code	Atlas Code	Mayo Access ID	Result LOINC	Notes
Is this for test of cure or detection of asymptomatic carriage?	114911	321	FAH6229	N/A	AOE
Group A Strep PCR	12301011926	STREP	FAH6162	60489-2	
Specimen Requirements:					
Container	Specimen	Temperature	Collect Vol	Submit Vol	Stability
Eswab Collection Kit	Throat Swab	Ambient	N/A	N/A	48 hours
Collection Instructions:					
Refrigerated is acceptable. Stability = 6 days.					
1. Use the ESwab Collection and Transport System. Remove the swab from the wrapper.					
2. Swab the posterior pharynx, tonsils, and other inflamed areas. Avoid touching the tongue, cheeks, and teeth.					
3. Uncap the ESwab transport tube.					
4. Place the specimen-containing swab into the ESwab transport tube and break the swab at the indicated score line.					
5. Cap the ESwab transport tube.					

For questions regarding these changes, please contact the Director of Microbiology, Dr. Christina Wojewoda
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