

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05 | 01 | 2026

POLICY LAST REVIEWED: 01 | 21 | 2026

OVERVIEW

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver resulting from viruses, drugs, toxins, and other etiologies. Viral hepatitis can be due to one of at least five different viruses, designated Hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E. Most cases are caused by Hepatitis A virus (HAV), Hepatitis B virus (HBV), or Hepatitis C virus (HCV).

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

Acute hepatitis panel testing is medically necessary for the following indications, when filed with a covered diagnosis codes (see Coding section).

1. To detect viral hepatitis infection when there are abnormal liver function test results, with or without signs or symptoms of hepatitis
2. Prior to and subsequent to liver transplantation.

All other indications are not covered for Medicare Advantage and not medically necessary for Commercial Products as there is no indication that technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Limitations

- After a hepatitis diagnosis has been established, only individual tests, rather than the entire panel, are needed.
- This panel is not indicated as a screening test for Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, nor is it indicated as a test to assess for prior vaccination against hepatitis A or hepatitis B.

Laboratories are not allowed to obtain clinical authorization or participate in the authorization process on behalf of the ordering physician. Only the ordering physician shall be involved in the authorization, appeal or other administrative processes related to prior authorization/medical necessity.

In no circumstance shall a laboratory or a physician/provider use a representative of a laboratory or anyone with a relationship to a laboratory and/or a third party to obtain authorization on behalf of the ordering physician, to facilitate any portion of the authorization process or any subsequent appeal of a claim where the authorization process was not followed and/or a denial for clinical appropriateness was issued, including any element of the preparation of necessary documentation of clinical appropriateness. If a laboratory or a third party is found to be supporting any portion of the authorization process, BCBSRI will deem the action a violation of this policy and severe action will be taken up to and including termination from the BCBSRI provider network. If a laboratory provides a laboratory service that has not been authorized, the service will be denied as the financial liability of the participating laboratory and may not be billed to the member.”

Commercial Products

Some genetic testing services are not covered and a contract exclusion for any self-funded group that has excluded the expanded coverage of biomarker testing related to the state mandate, R.I.G.L. §27-19-

81 described in the Biomarker Testing Mandate policy. For these groups, a list of which genetic testing services are covered with prior authorization, are not medically necessary or are not covered because they are a contract exclusion can be found in the Coding section of the Genetic Testing Services or Proprietary Laboratory Analyses policies. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet to determine whether the member's plan has customized benefit coverage. Please refer to the list of Related Policies for more information.

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable laboratory testing or not medically necessary/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND

Acute Hepatitis Panel includes the following tests:

- Hepatitis A antibody (HAAb), IgM Antibody;
- Hepatitis B core antibody (HBcAb), IgM Antibody;
- Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg); and
- Hepatitis C antibody

HAV is the most common cause of hepatitis in children and adolescents in the United States. Prior exposure is indicated by a positive IgG anti-HAV. Acute HAV is diagnosed by IgM anti-HAV, which typically appears within four weeks of exposure, and which disappears within three months of its appearance. IgG anti-HAV is similar in the timing of its appearance, but it persists indefinitely. Its detection indicates prior effective immunization or recovery from infection. Although HAV is spread most commonly by fecal-oral exposure, parenteral infection is possible during the acute viremia stage of the disease. After exposure, standard immune globulin may be effective as a prophylaxis.

HBV produces three separate antigens (surface, core, and e (envelope) antigens) when it infects the liver, although only hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) is included as part of this panel. Following exposure, the body normally responds by producing antibodies to each of these antigens; one of which is included in this panel: hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb)-IgM antibody. HBsAg is the earlier marker, appearing in serum four to eight weeks after exposure, and typically disappearing within six months after its appearance. If HBsAg remains detectable for greater than six months, this indicates chronic HBV infection. HBcAb, in the form of both IgG and IgM antibodies, are next to appear in serum, typically becoming detectable two to three months following exposure. The IgM antibody gradually declines or disappears entirely one to two years following exposure, but the IgG usually remains detectable for life. Because HBsAg is present for a relatively short period and usually displays a low titer, a negative result does not exclude an HBV diagnosis. HBcAb, on the other hand, rises to a much higher titer and remains elevated for a longer period of time, but a positive result is not diagnostic of acute disease, since it may be the result of a prior infection. The last marker to appear in the course of a typical infection is HBsAb, which appears in serum four to six months following exposure, remains positive indefinitely, and confers immunity. HBV is spread exclusively by exposure to infected blood or body fluids; in the U.S., sexual transmission accounts for 30% to 60% of new cases of HBV infection.

The diagnosis of acute HBV infection is best established by documentation of a positive IgM antibody against the core antigen (HBcAb-IgM) and by identification of a positive hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg). The diagnosis of chronic HBV infection is established primarily by identifying a positive hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) and demonstrating positive IgG antibody directed against the core antigen (HBcAb-IgG). Additional tests such as Hepatitis B e antigen (HBeAg) and Hepatitis B e antibody (HBeAb), the envelope antigen and antibody, are not included in the Hepatitis Panel, but may be of importance in assessing the infectivity of patients with HBV. Following completion of a HBV vaccination series, HBsAb alone may be used monthly for up to six months, or until a positive result is obtained, to verify an adequate antibody response.

HCV is the most common cause of post-transfusion hepatitis; overall HCV is responsible for 15% to 20% of all cases of acute hepatitis, and is the most common cause of chronic liver disease. The test most commonly used to identify HCV measures HCV antibodies, which appear in blood two to four months after infection. False positive HCV results can occur. For example, a patient with a recent yeast infection may produce a false positive anti-HCV result. For this reason, at present positive results usually are confirmed by a more specific technique. Like HBV, HCV is spread exclusively through exposure to infected blood or body fluids.

This panel of tests is used for differential diagnosis in a patient with symptoms of liver disease or injury. When the time of exposure or the stage of the disease is not known, a patient with continued symptoms of liver disease despite a completely negative Hepatitis Panel may need a repeat panel approximately two weeks to two months later to exclude the possibility of hepatitis. Once a diagnosis is established, specific tests can be used to monitor the course of the disease.

CODING

Medicare Advantage Plans and Commercial Products

The following code is considered medically necessary when filed with one of the diagnosis codes in the attachment below:

80074 Acute hepatitis panel This panel must include the following: Hepatitis A antibody (HAAb), IgM antibody (86709) Hepatitis B core antibody (HBcAb), IgM antibody (86705) Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) (87340) Hepatitis C antibody (86803)

[ICD-10 Diagnosis List for 80074](#)

RELATED POLICIES

Biomarker Testing Mandate

Genetic Testing Services

Medicare Advantage Plans National and Local Coverage Determinations

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, February/March 2026

Provider Update, August 2025

REFERENCES

1. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. National Coverage Determination (NCD) Hepatitis Panel/Acute Hepatitis Panel 190.33

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