

Appropriate Testing for Pharyngitis (CWP)



This measure evaluates the percentage of episodes for members 3 years of age and older in which the member was diagnosed with pharyngitis, dispensed an antibiotic, and received a group A streptococcus (strep) test for the episode.

Why is this measure important?

Overuse of antibiotics can lead to antibiotic resistance and negative clinical outcomes for members, such as developing *Clostridioides difficile* (C. diff) infections. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an increase in antibiotic-resistant infections persists in the U.S., with 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections resulting in 35,000 deaths occurring each year.

Coding Guidance

Description	CPT®/ICD-10 Codes
Group A Strep Tests	CPT: 87070, 87071, 87081, 87430, 87650-87652, 87880
Pharyngitis	ICD-10: J02.0, J02.8, J02.9, J03.00, J03.01, J03.02, J03.80, J03.81, J03.90, J03.91

Best Practices

- Provide same-day appointments when possible to avoid unnecessary use of the Emergency Department (ED).
- If a member is requesting antibiotics for a cold or sore throat, educate them on the differences between viral and bacterial infections and explain why antibiotics are not recommended for viral infections.
 - Discuss the importance of not overusing antibiotics and potential antibiotic resistance with repetitive use.
 - Educate patients on comfort measures without antibiotics (e.g., extra fluids and rest). The CDC has resources that can be used to determine symptom relief for viral illnesses.
 - Discourage the use of antibiotics for routine treatment of sore throat, unless clinically indicated.
- Educate members on when they should seek further care (i.e., if symptoms persist for more than three days).
- If prescribing antibiotic treatment, discuss the importance of using the antibiotics appropriately.
 - If prescribing an antibiotic for a bacterial infection, use the diagnosis code for the bacterial infection and/or comorbid conditions.
 - Clinical guidelines recommend a strep test when the only diagnosis is pharyngitis.
- Test for Group A strep prior to prescribing antibiotic treatment.
 - Strep tests can be either a rapid strep test or a lab test.
 - Strep testing must be done in conjunction with dispensing antibiotics for pharyngitis.
- Utilize in-office testing for immediate results.
- Document and code completed screenings with date and results.
- Include CPT codes for the Group A strep test and result when submitting claims.
- Provide instructions on managing symptoms at home with over-the-counter medications.
- Encourage patients to call or return to the office if new symptoms occur, or if the condition has not improved in three or more days.

For additional information about this measure, please refer to the HEDIS® guidelines available at [ncqa.org](https://www.ncqa.org). Visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for patient resources.