

The planned implementation of the Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR Panel, originally scheduled for July 28th, has been postponed due to unresolved billing compliance-related issues associated with the new test. Implementation will proceed once the billing compliance concerns have been thoroughly reviewed and resolved. Additional communication will be provided when a new go-live date has been established.

****New Test** Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR**

Effective ~~July 28th, 2026~~ TBD, the Microbiology Laboratory will implement a new test called Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR. This test is intended for use in outpatients with suspected upper respiratory viral infection and should replace the Respiratory Pathogen Panel in most cases.

This new test will be reported in the following manner:

- Influenza (Includes both Flu A and Flu B)
- RSV
- COVID-19
- Adenovirus
- Common cold virus***

*** Includes detection of rhinovirus/enterovirus, parainfluenza 1, 2, 3, and 4, coronavirus HKU1, 229E, NL63, and OC43, and human metapneumovirus. The “Common Cold Virus” target will be reported as Detected if one or more of these pathogens are detected. It will be reported as Not detected if none of the pathogens are detected.

Explanation

The Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR will detect all the viruses that are detected by the Respiratory Pathogen Panel but will be reported differently. Influenza, RSV, COVID-19, and Adenovirus will be specifically reported by the Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR. The influenza target will be reported Detected or Not detected and will not specifically designate influenza A or B. A “Common cold virus” target will also be reported.

The Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR has been developed to improve reimbursement in the outpatient setting. Payors are not reimbursing outpatient use of the Respiratory Pathogen Panel PCR (15 viruses/4 bacteria) unless patients are immunocompromised or being admitted with severe respiratory illness.

See screenshots below for examples of reporting.



! Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR

Order: 2750814

Collected 6/26/2026 10:14 Status: Final result

Test Result Released: Yes (not seen)

Specimen Information: Nasopharynx; Swab

0 Result Notes

Component

Ref Range & Units (hover)

SARS-COV-2 Not Detected

Respiratory Syncytial Virus Not Detected

Influenza Not Detected

Adenovirus Not Detected

Common Cold Virus **Detected !**

Comment: "Common Cold Virus" includes detection of the following respiratory viruses: Coronavirus HKU1, Coronavirus 229E, Coronavirus NL63, Coronavirus OC43, Human metapneumovirus, Parainfluenza virus 1-4, and Rhinovirus/Enterovirus. A "detected" result indicates one or more of these viruses was identified.

Resulting Agency

VCU MEDICAL CENTER MICROBIOLOGY LABORATORY

Outpatient Respiratory Path...

! Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR

Collected: 06/26/26 10:14 | Swab from Nasopharynx
Updated: 06/26/26 11:10 | Final result

Resulting Lab: VCU MEDICAL CENTER MICROBIOLOGY LABORATORY

SARS-COV-2	Not Detected
Respiratory Syncytial Virus	Not Detected
Influenza	Not Detected
ADENOVIRUS	Not Detected
Common Cold Virus	Detected !

Narrative:
Testing performed by nucleic acid amplification

Frequently Asked Questions

- Question - Can I call the lab to inquire about what virus was detected when the "Common cold virus" target is Detected?
Answer - Yes, but please be judicious. Excessive phone calls are disruptive to laboratory workflow.
- Question – What will the turnaround time be for the Outpatient Respiratory Pathogen PCR?
Answer – The turnaround time will be the same as the Respiratory Pathogen Panel PCR, ~4 hours from time of laboratory receipt.
- Question – How will this new test improve reimbursement?
Answer – Payors have decided that tests that report more than 5 targets will not be reimbursed in the outpatient setting unless the patient is immunocompromised or being admitted for a severe respiratory illness. Panels reporting 5 or fewer targets should be reimbursable for outpatients.
- Question – What if I suspect *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* or Pertussis?
Answer – The laboratory offers specific tests for both pathogens called "*Mycoplasma pneumoniae* PCR" and "Pertussis PCR".
- Question – Why was adenovirus selected to be reported by name?
Answer – In contrast to the viruses included within the "Common cold target", adenovirus infection can lead to prolonged febrile illness. Identifying it specifically will allow providers to counsel patients on what to expect.
- Question – Is the Respiratory Pathogen Panel PCR (15 viruses / 4 bacteria) still available?
Answer – Yes. We encourage the use of this test in immunocompromised patients, patients being admitted for severe respiratory illness, and inpatients.



- Question – Will the weekly Respiratory (and GI) Pathogen Report distributed by email still include a detailed breakdown by virus type or will the report only list the “common cold” virus?
Answer – Yes.

For questions, please contact Pathology Client Services at (804) 828-7284 or Microbiology at (804) 628-4000. The Main Campus Microbiology Director on-call pager is 9075.