

News

Clinical Laboratory Test Update

Meningitis/Encephalitis PCR Panel (MEP)

Effective November 3, 2025, the UCHealth system will expand the availability of the Meningitis/Encephalitis PCR Panel for patients. This test will now be available at PVH (North region) and UCH (Metro region), in addition to the existing testing at MHN and PMC (South region).

Test Information and Targets

Test Name	Meningitis/Encephalitis PCR Panel
Epic order	LAB5200
Accepted Specimens	1 mL CSF in sterile container Note: CSF from shunts cannot be tested
Results	Qualitative (see below)
Performed	Daily
CPT Code(s)	87483

The BioFire FilmArray Meningitis/Encephalitis Panel (MEP or ME Panel) is a qualitative multiplexed nucleic acid-based in vitro diagnostic test. The BioFire ME Panel is capable of simultaneous detection and identification of multiple bacterial, viral and yeast nucleic acids directly from cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) specimens obtained via lumbar puncture from individuals with signs and/or symptoms of meningitis and/or encephalitis. The following organisms can be identified using the BioFire ME Panel:

Bacteria:

- *Escherichia coli* K1
- *Haemophilus influenzae*
- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- *Neisseria meningitidis* (encapsulated)
- *Streptococcus agalactiae*
- *Streptococcus pneumoniae*

Viruses:

- Cytomegalovirus
- Enterovirus
- Herpes simplex virus 1
- Herpes simplex virus 2

- Human herpesvirus 6
- Human parechovirus
- Varicella zoster virus

Yeast:

- *Cryptococcus neoformans/gatti*

Testing Notes

The ME Panel must be run in conjunction with a CSF culture.

The ME Panel does not distinguish between latent and active CMV and HHV-6 infections. Detection of these viruses may indicate primary infection, secondary reactivation, or the presence of latent virus. Results should always be interpreted in conjunction with other clinical, laboratory, and epidemiological information.

The ME Panel has lower sensitivity for detection of HSV and *Cryptococcus*.

- If the ME Panel is negative for HSV but there is a high clinical suspicion for HSV encephalitis, CSF should be re-tested using the standalone HSV PCR, and empiric therapy continued until this confirmatory testing is complete.
- If the ME Panel is negative for *Cryptococcus* but there is a high clinical suspicion for *Cryptococcus* meningitis, CSF should be tested for cryptococcal antigen (CSF CrAG).

For information about the Clinical Lab's tests, visit your lab's Test Catalog (The Source > Apps > Lab Test Catalog). You can also access University of Colorado Hospital Clinical Laboratory Test Directory at <https://www.testmenu.com/universityhospital>, which has links to all of the system lab catalogues. If you have any questions or special concerns, email them to cara.faliano@uchealth.org