

Clinical Laboratory News

Critical and Significant Values

System-Wide Standardization for Microbiology, Molecular Diagnostics and Infection Prevention

The UCHealth Medical Executive Committee has approved the following laboratory results as critical or significant values for Microbiology and Molecular Diagnostics testing. These values are effective on 10/27/2026. This document does not reflect regional changes; these values are the new system-wide UCHealth standard. While implementation will be consistent across all sites, the impact will vary depending on each site's existing baseline and may include the addition of new or removal of critical and significant values.

Value Type	Definition	Notification TAT Turnaround Time
Critical Value	Those tests results or values, which are unexpected, may be imminently life threatening, and require immediate notification to the healthcare provider.	Closed loop communication (electronic notification with acknowledgement or verbal communication with read back) within 60 minutes of result
Significant Value	Those unexpected test results or values which are notified to the healthcare provider due to importance for patient care but are not imminently life threatening.	Passive notification (does not require electronic acknowledgement or readback) promptly as soon as results can be communicated (within the same shift or day).

Note: Some results are critical or significant for the first positive result only. These results will be recommunicated once per organism morphology per 7 days and are indicated on the chart below with ** asterisks.

For more information and to view the standardized Infection Prevention notifications, please see the [lab procedure](#).

For any questions, please contact:

Dr. Bruce McCollister bruce.mccollister@cuanschutz.edu

Dr. Harry Porterfield harry.porterfield@cuanschutz.edu or

Veronica Broslawik veronica.broslawik@uchealth.org

Test	Specimen Type	Component	Result	UCHealth Standard
Acanthamoeba Culture	Any	Acanthamoeba species	Positive	Critical
AFB Culture PCR	Any (unless otherwise noted)	Acid-Fast Stain Culture Growth MTB-Rifampin PCR	Positive or Detected	Significant
Bacterial Culture	Any	<i>Nocardia</i> species other partially acid-fast organisms	Positive	Significant
Bacterial Culture	Any	Unable to rule out: <i>Bacillus anthracis</i> <i>Brucella</i> species <i>Burkholderia pseudomallei</i> <i>Francisella</i> species <i>Yersinia pestis</i> other potential biothreat agents	Positive	Significant
Blood Culture	Blood	Direct stain - Bacterial, Fungal, or AFB Bacterial Culture Growth Fungal Culture Growth AFB Culture Growth	Positive	Critical**
Blood Parasite Exam	Blood	Rapid Malaria Antigen Blood Parasite Stain	Positive	Critical**
Body Fluid Culture PCR	Normally Sterile Sources (such as amniotic, ascites, peritoneal, pericardial, synovial/bursa)	Gram Stain or Fungal Stain Bacterial Culture Growth Fungal Culture Growth PCR	Positive or Detected	Significant**
Bordetella PCR, Respiratory PCR	Respiratory	Bordetella pertussis	Detected	Significant
CSF Culture PCR	CSF	Direct Stain - Bacterial, Fungal, or AFB Bacterial Culture Growth Fungal Culture Growth AFB Culture Growth Any PCR including meningitis-encephalitis panel	Positive or Detected	Critical
Cryptococcal Antigen	Blood CSF	Cryptococcus neoformans/gatti antigen	Positive	Critical
Eye Culture PCR	Aqueous or Vitreous fluid	Direct stain - Bacterial or Fungal Bacterial Culture Growth Fungal Culture Growth PCR	Positive or Detected	Significant**

Fungal Culture	Any	Blastomyces dermatidis Coccidioides immitus Histoplasma capsulatum dimorphic molds not otherwise listed	Positive	Significant
Test	Specimen Type	Component	Result	UCHealth Standard
Herpes simplex virus PCR Varicella zoster virus PCR	Blood	HSV PCR VZV PCR	Detected	Critical
Measles PCR	Any	Measles PCR	Detected	Significant
PCR	Bronchoalveolar Lavage	Cytomegalovirus Pneumocystis carinii/jirovecii	Detected	Significant
Tissue Culture PCR	Normally Sterile Sources (such as brain biopsy, heart biopsy, organs, epidural or spine tissue)	Direct Stain - Bacterial Bacterial Culture Growth	Positive	Critical**
Tissue Culture PCR	Normally sterile sources (such as brain biopsy, heart biopsy, organs, epidural or spine tissue)	Direct stain - Fungal Fungal Culture Growth PCR	Positive or Detected	Significant
Transfusion Reaction Culture	Infused blood products	Gram Stain Culture Growth	Positive	Critical