

INFOBulletin

Keeping health care providers informed of payment, policy or program changes

To: Physicians, Hospitals, Clinics and Laboratories

Published By: Diagnostic Services and Planning Branch

Date Issued: January 14, 2013

Effective Date: January 1, 2013

Bulletin #: 4584

Re: Laboratory Test Utilization Management Changes to the Schedule of Benefits – Laboratory Services

1. Background
2. OHIP Eligibility for AST Testing
3. OHIP Eligibility for Folate Testing
4. Links to Amendments to Ontario Regulation 552, section 1 and the Schedule of Laboratory Benefits, under the Health Insurance Act
5. Schedule of Benefits for Laboratory Services (Addendum) – Effective January 1, 2013.

1. Background

The ministry is taking steps to reduce the use of laboratory tests that do not add value for the clinicians and patients of Ontario. Health Quality Ontario – The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC) had undertaken laboratory test utilization reviews for AST and folate tests. Based on these reviews and expert consultations conducted by OHTAC, and discussions with the Ontario Medical Association, changes to OHIP eligibility for both AST and folate tests are being implemented.

2. OHIP Eligibility for AST Testing

The OHTAC recommendation for AST testing is being implemented:

AST is a less specific test for liver disorders than ALT, and so has limited utility in the community setting. *OHTAC recommended that AST testing be restricted to ordering by or on the advice of physicians with experience treating liver disorders.*



Consequently, changes to the Schedule of Benefits for Laboratory Services are being made to stipulate that AST is only insured for insured persons when ordered by or on the advice of a physician with expertise in hepatic disorders.

3. OHIP Eligibility for Folate Testing

The OHTAC recommendation for folate testing is being implemented:

Folate deficiency is rare in Canada and there is unnecessary testing occurring in Ontario. OHTAC recommended:

- *Red Blood Cell Folate is only insured for insured persons with:*
 - a) *low hemoglobin levels and a high mean corpuscular volume; or*
 - b) *suspected gastrointestinal disorders causing malabsorption or suspected malnutrition of any cause*

Additionally, folate testing is being restricted to red blood cell folate, except when ordered by or on the advice of a physician with expertise in hematological or gastrointestinal disorders.

Consequently, changes to the Schedule of Benefits for Laboratory Services are being made to stipulate that Red Blood Cell Folate is only insured in the above clinical conditions and that Serum Folate is only insured for insured persons when ordered by or on the advice of a physician with expertise in hematological or gastrointestinal disorders. To facilitate this change, the previous L-code for Red Blood Cell Folate that included Serum Folate (L309) has been split, an additional code created and LMS units adjusted to reflect the split.

4. Amendments to Ontario Regulation 552, section 1 and the Schedule of Laboratory Benefits, under the Health Insurance Act

- http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900552_e.htm
- http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/sob/lab/lab_mn.html

ADDENDUM DATED JANUARY 14, 2013 **(Effective as of January 1, 2013) TO THE SCHEDULE OF BENEFITS** **FOR LABORATORY SERVICES**

Effective January 1, 2013, the Schedule of Benefits for Laboratory Services is changed as follows:

1. The following paragraphs are added to the Preamble of the Schedule:

Paragraph #35: L222 SGOT (AST) is only insured for insured persons when ordered by or on the advice of a physician with expertise in hepatic disorders.

Paragraph #36: L308 Serum folate is only insured for insured persons when ordered by or on the advice of a physician with expertise in hematological or gastrointestinal disorders.

Paragraph #37: L309 RBC (red blood cell) folate is only insured for insured persons with the following conditions,

- a) low hemoglobin levels and a high mean corpuscular volume; or
 - b) suspected gastrointestinal disorders causing malabsorption or suspected malnutrition of any cause
2. The following test is added to the Schedule:

Code	Description	LMS Units
L308	Serum folate	10

3. The description and the number of LMS units for the following test are as follows:

Code	Description	LMS Units
L309	RBC (red blood cell) folate, to include hematocrit	35