NICU genetic testing

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

UnitedHealthcare understands that genetic testing can give providers and our members a more comprehensive look at their health. Having this information for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) patients is especially important, as up to 30%[1] of babies in the NICU setting have an underlying genetic condition. Receiving a genetic diagnosis while in the NICU may aid the medical team with additional information to further create a personalized care plan, which may include targeted therapies, procedures or redirection of care. For more questions on NICU genetic testing, please contact **United_Genetics@uhc.com**.

Frequently asked questions

Who is eligible for the program?

Beginning July 1, 2021, United Healthcare members in the NICU on commercial polices who were born at 32 weeks gestation or above where the provider suspects a genetic condition, are eligible for a select rapid test. Please refer to the clinical indicator document for suggestions on when an underlying genetic condition may be suspected.

What if I want to use a test or laboratory that is not part of this program?

At this time, a provider or facility would follow their current testing and billing guidelines.

Will this program expand to include other laboratories and/or tests?

Laboratories and testing options appropriate for achieving a rapid genetic diagnosis in the NICU setting will continue to be evaluated and updated as needed.

How does this impact our facility's current inpatient contract with UnitedHealthcare?

There is no impact to a facility's current contract. The NICU Genetic Testing program is a new program, effective July 1, 2021, where tests pre-selected for inclusion in the program may be submitted directly to the approved laboratory for reimbursement. When a program approved test is utilized with the code UHC NICU, the laboratory will know to seek reimbursement from UnitedHealthcare directly and not the hospital.

Is a hospital required to participate in the program?

No. Health care professionals in the inpatient setting may continue to utilize their current process for ordering genetic testing through their laboratory of choice, or they may choose to utilize one of the program's participating laboratory tests.

Does a facility utilizing an approved NICU test seek reimbursement from UnitedHealthcare?

No. When a facility is utilizing a test approved for inclusion in the program, it should send the test to the appropriate laboratory, including the code UHC NICU. The facility should not seek reimbursement from UnitedHealthcare for the test, as reimbursement will be managed with the participating laboratories directly.

What genetic tests are included in the NICU Genetic Testing program?

Test options will continue to be evaluated and updated. At this time, rapid whole exome sequencing (rWES), available through XomeDx*Xpress*®, analyzes the exome, which is the part of the genome that is thought to include most mutations that impact health. In addition, a next-generation sequencing panel is available through NewbornDxTM, this test analyzes a targeted number of genes associated with a given clinical presentation or disease, such as those genes most likely to contribute to genetic illness in the NICU.

What resources are available to assist in test ordering selection, results interpretation and/or genetic counseling?

- **Laboratory Support**

Both Athena Diagnostics and GeneDx have professionals, including genetic counselors, geneticists and clinicians, available to answer questions at no cost. For assistance, please contact Athena and/or GeneDx:

- Athena Diagnostics NewbornDx™ Team: 800-394-4493, ext. 2031 or GeneTeam@questdiagnostics.com
- GeneDx Xpress Team: Xpress@genedx.com, 888-729-1206

- **Genetic Counseling Services**

  InformedDNA, an in-network virtual genetic counseling practice, is available to provide pre-test and/or post-test genetic counseling and informed consent for genetic testing to the parents of your patients via telephone. To refer a patient, go to **informeddna.com** or call **800-975-4819**. InformedDNA is in-network with most UnitedHealthcare commercials plans.

Both laboratories contact the provider to discuss the results.

	XomeDx*Xpress*®	NewbornDx™ Advanced Sequencing Evaluation
Test Type	Rapid whole exome sequencing (rWES), including up to 20,000 genes	Next-generation sequencing panel consisting of 1,722 genes most likely to contribute to genetic illnesses in the NICU
Diagnostic Yield (rate)	Up to 26% for singletons; 38-58% for trios	20% for proband (patient) only; 32% for duos; 33-67% for trios
Incidental or Secondary Findings	Yes, available with appropriate consent	No, not included as targeted test for NICU setting designed to streamline consent and minimize secondary findings unrelated to indication for testing.
Turnaround Time (TAT)	7 days for verbal report; 14 days for written, final report	3-7 days (average 4 days). Final written report is provided at same time as verbal report.
Sample Type(s)	NICU Patient: ≥1mL blood in lavender top Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) tube preferred Parents: ≥1mL blood in EDTA tube or 2 buccal swabs/person	NICU Patient: Dried blood spot card or 1 mL whole blood in lavender top Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) tube. Parents: choose from dried blood spot card, whole blood or saliva.
Trios Required	No, but **strongly** recommended to increase diagnostic yield and to reduce the number of variants of uncertain significance (VUS)	Proband (patient) only, duo or trio ordering options available. Trios are preferred but not required.
Contact Information	Xpress@genedx.com 888-729-1206	800-394-4493, ext. 2031 or GeneTeam@questdiagnostics.com.

Next Steps:

1. Select either rWES or a large NICU panel for your patient. If you are unsure which test is best for your patient or have questions, please contact the laboratories above or consider genetic counseling services.
2. Each laboratory has their own consenting and sample collection requirements. Reach out to your selected laboratory for further assistance and/or if test kits are needed.

3. When ordering an approved program test, include the code UHC NICU on the lab order form. The facility should not seek reimbursement from United Healthcare for the test, as reimbursement will be managed with the participating laboratories directly.
4. If you do not have on-site access to genetic specialists, InformedDNA's (**800-975-4819**) board-certified genetic counselors, working in conjunction with board-certified medical and molecular physician geneticists, are available to provide pre-test and/or post-test genetic counseling via phone. They communicate directly with you like any other specialty consultant and bill your patient's insurance plan.

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