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| *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) |
| Information for staff |
| OFFICIAL |

## What is *Candida auris*?

*Candida* is a family of yeasts that live on the skin and inside the human body. *Candida auris* (also called *C. auris*) is an uncommon yeast that can cause serious infections including bloodstream, urinary tract and other invasive infections.

In most cases, patients are colonised and carry the yeast somewhere on their body without causing any symptoms. People who are colonised with *C. auris* may be unaware and can pass the organism to others.

*C. auris* is much less common than other types of *Candida* such as *Candida albicans* which is a common cause of yeast infections (for example, thrush).

## Why is *C. auris* a problem?

### It causes serious infections.

*C. auris* can cause bloodstream and other serious invasive infections, particularly in hospital and nursing home patients with multiple medical problems. More than 1 in 3 patients with invasive *C. auris* infection die.

### It’s often resistant to medicines.

Antifungal medicines commonly used to treat *Candida* infections often don’t work for *C. auris*. Some infections have been resistant to all three types of antifungal medicines.

### It’s becoming more common.

Although *C. auris* was only discovered in 2009, it has spread quickly and caused infections or facility outbreaks in more than a dozen countries across five continents.

### It’s difficult to identify.

*C. auris* can be misidentified as other types of yeast unless specialized laboratory technology is used. Unrecognised, *C. auris* can spread to other patients and cause further outbreaks.

### It can spread in hospitals and nursing homes.

Like other multi-drug resistant organisms, *C. auris* can be transmitted in healthcare settings and cause outbreaks. *C. auris* has caused outbreaks in healthcare facilities in other countries. It can colonise patients for long periods, persist in the environment, and withstand disinfectants routinely used in healthcare facilities.

## How is *C. auris* spread?

*C. auris* is most commonly found on the skin. *C. auris* may spread from person-to-person through contact with someone who is infected or colonised or via equipment that has been shared between patients and has not been adequately cleaned and disinfected between uses. *C. auris* can also survive on surfaces for lengthy periods so inadequate cleaning and disinfection of the environment is another way the organism can be spread.

## Is there treatment for *C. auris*?

Most *C. auris* infections are treatable with a class of antifungal drugs called echinocandins. However, some *C. auris* infections have been resistant to all three main classes of antifungal medications, making them more difficult to treat or in some cases, untreatable.

In some situations, multiple classes of antifungals at high doses may be required to treat the infection.

## How are patients tested for *C. auris*?

The best samples for screening patients for *C. auris* are axilla and groin swabs. These can be sent to the local laboratory for culture but may require further identification at a reference laboratory for confirmation.

## Who is at risk from *C. auris*?

People at higher risk of acquiring *C. auris* are generally similar to those who acquire other types of *Candida* infections, including having recent surgery, diabetes, and broad-spectrum antibiotic and antifungal use.

*C. auris* is more frequently found in people who have had healthcare overseas, particularly in India, Pakistan and South Africa. Other countries that have had cases and experienced outbreaks include the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain.

## How long do people remain colonised with *C. auris*?

It is unknown exactly how long people can remain colonised with *C. auris*, but it is likely to be many months. Repeated admissions and treatment with antibiotics and antifungals will increase the risk of continued colonisation.

Until further evidence to the contrary is available, the current advice for the use of infection control precautions is that once a person is identified as a case of *C. auris*, they should be considered potentially infectious indefinitely. It is recommended that patients with *C. auris* be placed into a single room with contact precautions every time they are admitted to a healthcare facility and precautions maintained until discharge (even if screening specimens taken at the time are negative for *C. auris*).

It is essential that healthcare facilities advise other healthcare or residential care facilities of the diagnosis of *C. auris* whenever a patient is transferred.

## How can I help prevent the spread of *C. auris* in my facility?

It is important that all healthcare staff ensure they always adhere to standard precautions for all patients. This includes performing hand hygiene and cleaning and disinfecting all shared patient equipment between each use.

If a person is identified with *C. auris* then further transmission-based precautions will need to be implemented. *C. auris* is spread via contact so contact precautions will be required.

This includes the following.

* Placing the patient in a single room with own ensuite.
* All staff to wear a long-sleeved gown and gloves for all patient contact.
* It is preferable that equipment be dedicated to the use of the patient. If this cannot be done, then equipment should be cleaned and disinfected with 1000ppm chlorine-based disinfectant or another sporicidal agent.
* Twice daily and discharge cleaning and disinfection of the patient room to include a 1000ppm chlorine-based disinfectant or another sporicidal agent.

Visitors are not required to wear a gown and gloves. Please ensure all visitors are advised to perform hand hygiene before and after visiting the patient. Visitors should also be requested not to visit any other patients within the facility immediately after visiting someone with *C. auris*.

## Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions, your hospital’s infection prevention and control professional can help.

The *Victorian guideline C. auris for health services* (2023) is available on the [Department of Health website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/victorian-guideline-on-candida-auris-for-health-services) <www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/victorian-guideline-on-candida-auris-for-health-services>.

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