

## HEALTH ALERT

### Ongoing *Candida auris* Outbreak

April 1, 2022

#### Summary and Action Items

- The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), in collaboration with local public health and healthcare partners, is investigating an ongoing outbreak of *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) infection associated with multiple healthcare facilities, including acute care, long-term acute care hospitals, and skilled nursing facilities.
- *C. auris* is an urgent public health threat due to the high morbidity and mortality associated with infection, potential for multi-drug resistance, and ability to rapidly spread in healthcare settings.
- Ohio healthcare facilities, including hospitals and nursing homes, should **be on alert for cases of *C. auris* infection or colonization, implement appropriate transmission-based precautions, and collaborate with public health on screening procedures** to facilitate timely and accurate detection of *C. auris* and reduce the risk of further spread.
- Laboratories should review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on appropriate testing methodologies for the correct identification of *C. auris* and, in coordination with healthcare partners, perform species identification of yeast from patient specimens.
- **The transfer or acceptance of a patient should be based on the facility's ability to provide the appropriate level of care and not dependent on the patient's *C. auris* status.**

#### Recommendations for Healthcare Facilities

To identify and prevent the spread of *C. auris*, ODH recommends that healthcare facilities, including hospitals and nursing homes, take the following action steps:

- **Rapidly identify cases of *C. auris* infection or colonization.**
  - Screen patients who meet any of the following risk criteria for *C. auris*:
    - Patients presenting from long-term acute care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, or rehabilitation facilities who, within the past 12 months, have a history of:
      - Multi-drug resistant organisms (MDROs).
      - Mechanical ventilation or tracheostomy.
      - Chronic or non-healing wounds.
    - Patients hospitalized outside of the United States within the preceding 12 months.
    - Residents with extended stays in healthcare facilities (acute care and long-term care).

- Public health may recommend targeted screening of patients who have shared the same caregiver or the same unit as a known *C. auris* patient if there is risk for transmission (i.e., transmission-based precautions were not in place).
- **Follow CDC guidance for [Infection Control](#).**
  - Place the patient in a private room whenever possible.
  - Use appropriate [transmission-based precautions](#).
  - Conduct daily and terminal cleaning of a patient's room with a disinfectant active against *C. auris* [refer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA LIST P](#))].
  - Notify receiving healthcare facilities when a patient with *C. auris* colonization or infection is transferred (see [sample inter-facility infection control transfer form](#)).

### **Recommendations for Patient Transfers**

As with any other MDRO, decisions to discharge an infected or colonized patient from one level of care to another should be based on clinical criteria and the ability of the accepting facility to provide care — *not* on the presence or absence of *C. auris* infection or colonization or potential exposure to *C. auris*. Receiving healthcare facilities should be able to implement appropriate [transmission-based precautions](#) for *C. auris*, as they would for other MDROs. Facilities that care for patients with other MDROs or *Clostridioides difficile* are also capable of caring for patients with *C. auris*. Facilities that would like to discuss care for patients with *C. auris* may contact the ODH Healthcare-Associated Infections/Antimicrobial Resistance (HAI/AR) Program at (614) 995-5599 or [HAIAR@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:HAIAR@odh.ohio.gov). Per routine procedures for patients infected with MDROs, clear interfacility transfer communication is required to ensure appropriate precautions are taken when patients are being transferred between healthcare facilities, including communication of any lab results finalized after the patient has been transferred.

In the context of the current *C. auris* outbreak, the ODH HAI/AR Program recommends that [transmission-based precautions](#) be implemented when:

- Patient being transferred has known *C. auris* infection.
- Patient being transferred has known previous *C. auris* infection.
- Patient being transferred has known *C. auris* skin colonization (identified through surveillance testing).

### **Laboratory Identification**

If *C. auris* infection is suspected, healthcare facilities or laboratories should contact their local health department for further guidance.

- *C. auris* can be difficult for clinical laboratories to detect and may require coordinated reference testing for confirmation.
- *C. auris* can be misidentified as a number of different organisms when using traditional biochemical methods for yeast identification (see <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/identification.html>).
- If species identity cannot be determined, further characterization using appropriate methodology should be sought.

- If appropriate methodology for species characterization is not available, or if *Candida* species are unidentified or suspected to be *C. auris*, healthcare facilities should contact ODH for further guidance and coordination of specimen submission for confirmatory testing.
- An unusual increase in the number of unidentified *Candida* species infections in a patient care unit, including increases in isolation of *Candida* from urine specimens, should prompt suspicion for *C. auris*.

### **Resources**

- Fact Sheet for Infection Preventionists <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/fact-sheets/cdc-message-infection-experts.html>.
- Transmission-based Precautions <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/c-auris-infection-control.html>.
- Surveillance and Laboratory <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/c-auris-surveillance.html>; <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/identification.html>.
- Sample Transfer Notification Form [Inter-Facility Infection Control Transfer Form for States Establishing HAI Prevention Collaboratives \(cdc.gov\)](#).
- Resources for Patients and Families <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/patients-qa.html>.

### **Contact**

For general questions related to *C. auris*, healthcare providers and facilities should contact their local health department. To locate a local health department, please visit <https://odhgateway.odh.ohio.gov/lhdinformationsystem/Directory/GetMyLHD>

Ohio local health departments should contact the ODH Bureau of Infectious Diseases HAI/AR Program at [HAIAR@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:HAIAR@odh.ohio.gov) or (614) 995-5599.