Health Advisory: *Candida auris* – Increased Transmission in U.S. Healthcare Facilities, December 20, 2022

Action Requested:

- Be aware that an emerging, often multidrug-resistant fungal pathogen, *Candida auris* (*C. auris*), is spreading westward across the U.S. and causing outbreaks in healthcare facilities.
  - As of December 2022, no *C. auris* cases have been reported in Washington State, but healthcare transmission has occurred in California, Oregon (1,2 – references below), Nevada (3), the Mid-West, and East Coast.
- Inquire about high-risk exposures in all newly admitted patients and consider *C. auris* screening in patients at high risk for *C. auris*, including those who have had:
  - Close contact in a healthcare setting to someone diagnosed with *C. auris* infection or colonization.
  - An overnight stay in a healthcare facility outside the U.S. or in a region within the U.S. with documented *C. auris* cases in the previous year.
- Immediately report any suspected or confirmed *C. auris* cases or outbreaks to Public Health by calling 206-296-4774.
  - *C. auris* becomes a notifiable condition in WA as of January 1, 2023.
- Consultation with an infectious disease specialist and Public Health is highly recommended when *C. auris* colonization or infection is suspected to ensure appropriate testing and treatment.
- Coordinate *C. auris* screening and testing with Public Health by calling 206-296-4774.
- Be aware that *C. auris* can be misidentified through commercial laboratory testing and specific technology is needed for correct identification.
- Be aware that in addition to the screening recommendations above, Public Health will soon begin offering proactive *C. auris* screening to residents at a local long-term ventilator capable healthcare facility. These are the types of settings which have been most heavily impacted in California and East Coast outbreaks.
- Ensure appropriate infection prevention and control practices:
  - Patients with suspected or confirmed *C. auris* in healthcare facilities should be managed using contact precautions and placed in a single room whenever possible.
  - When *C. auris* is suspected, use healthcare disinfectants that are effective against *C. auris*.
  - Remain vigilant for any increase in infections due to unusual *Candida* species in a patient care unit, including from urine specimens, and consider *C. auris*.
  - Reinforce and audit core infection prevention practices in healthcare facilities.
  - Communicate information about colonization or infection with *C. auris* during care transitions within and transfers between healthcare settings. Consider using the CDC Interfacility transfer form.
  - For laboratories working with suspect or confirmed *C. auris*, be aware of safety considerations including recommended PPE, disinfection, and disposal.
Background

Since its discovery in 2009, *C. auris* has emerged globally as a life-threatening, highly transmissible, often multidrug-resistant yeast. In the past year, CDC has published several reports of ongoing transmission of highly resistant strains of *C. auris* in United States’ healthcare facilities, particularly in units caring for patients recovering from COVID-19 (4,5,6). Patients with long-term acute care and indwelling devices are at highest risk for acquisition. International healthcare is often the initial source of introduction of *C. auris* to a region. Subsequent healthcare transmission may occur due to shedding in the healthcare environment, resistance of *C. auris* to standard healthcare disinfectants, and lapses in infection control practices.

As of December 20, 2022, *C. auris* has not been detected in Washington but represents a serious threat to vulnerable patients. This [map](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDHS/bulletins/3030234) has details about where cases have been identified within the U.S. WA DOH performs special surveillance for *C. auris* by screening isolates submitted from high risk patients and sentinel lab submissions of non-albicans *Candida* species to the WA Public Health Laboratory for species identification.

References

2. Oregon Health Authority News Release. No other cases of Candida auris infection found at Salem Hospital. Jan 6, 2022. [https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDHS/bulletins/3045cee](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDHS/bulletins/3045cee)
3. Causey K. Candida auris technical bulletin April 22, 2022. [https://dpbh.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dpbhnvgov/content/Resources/TB_C-auris_042222.pdf](https://dpbh.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dpbhnvgov/content/Resources/TB_C-auris_042222.pdf)

Resources

- *Candida auris* resources, WA Department of Health
- *Candida auris* testing information, WA Department of Health
- Antimicrobial Products Registered with EPA for Claims Against *Candida auris*, Environmental Protection Agency
- *Candida auris*- Information for Laboratorians and Health Professionals, CDC
- General Information about *Candida auris*, CDC