



Candida auris – a guide for patients and visitors

Candida auris (*C. auris*) is an uncommon fungus which has been seen in patients at a small number of hospitals in England. In some cases patients may have no symptoms but it can lead to bloodstream, wound and ear infections. This guide aims to provide key information on the fungus, how patients are tested, steps in place to help prevent the spread of *C. auris*, its treatment, and information for hospital visitors.

What is *Candida auris*?

Candida is a family of fungi (yeasts) that live on the skin and inside the human body. *C. auris* is much less common than other types of candida such as *Candida albicans* which can cause yeast infections (thrush).

Some people can be carriers of *C. auris* without realising it, as they have no symptoms and do not become unwell as a result. However *C. auris* can cause problems in hospitals. *C. auris* can occasionally get in to surgical wounds or the bloodstream and enter the body during medical treatment including operations or when urinary catheters or drips are inserted. Infections are usually minor but can become more serious, although serious infections are rare. As of July 2017, no-one has died from *C. auris* infection in the United Kingdom.

Do I need to be concerned?

We would like to reassure you that PHE is working with NHS Trusts to monitor the situation closely and further understanding of *C. auris*. Hospitals are working hard to report new cases or outbreaks, are undertaking testing for *C. auris*, and are putting in place measures to help control any spread of *C. auris*.

PHE is also ensuring that NHS Trusts and other healthcare providers and experts nationwide are kept fully informed. We will provide further expert advice as needed.

How are patients tested for *C. auris*?

A healthcare professional will take swabs from different parts of a patient's body to test for *C. auris*. This may happen on admission to hospital or during a patient's stay in hospital.

What will happen if I have a *C. auris* infection?

Potential symptoms include pus at a wound, or increases in temperature and feeling generally unwell if a drip line or urinary catheter is infected. Inpatients diagnosed with a *C. auris* infection will usually be cared for in a single room to help prevent any spread of *C. auris*. Patients with a *C. auris* infection will usually be treated with antifungal medicines.

What steps are in place to help prevent the spread of *C. auris*?

PHE is working closely with affected hospitals to advise on additional infection control measures to limit the spread of *C. auris*. Measures include screening and isolating infected patients, enhanced hand hygiene procedures, and enhanced cleaning of affected clinical areas.

How is *C. auris* spread?

Exactly how *C. auris* is spread is still being investigated but it appears to be transmitted from person-to-person in hospitals. This is most likely due to a number of factors; *C. auris* is difficult to clear completely from the environment and it is easy to pick up on clothes, equipment, and hands.

The spread of infection can be limited by washing hands and using alcohol gel before and after touching patients or any items around the bedside. Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown, plastic aprons and gloves.

Can I do anything to help prevent the spread of *C. auris*?

Where possible, patients should avoid touching any areas of broken skin or wound dressings and ensure they wash their hands regularly, particularly after using the toilet and before eating food.

Healthy people do not usually become infected with *C. auris*. However visitors should wash their hands and use alcohol hand gel before and after touching patients or any items around the bedside. Visitors may also be asked to wear a gown, plastic aprons and gloves.

What happens after I go home?

Patients diagnosed with a *C. auris* infection will be treated with antifungal agents before being discharged. No special treatment is required for patients found to be carrying *C. auris*. However patients who know they are, or have been, a carrier should inform hospital staff on re-admission.

Links to further information:

More information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/candida-auris>

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