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** NOTICE: This health alert provides written guidance for health care professionals and others who may need to take action to prevent or control a notifiable condition. It is not intended to provide guidance for the general public.*

HAN Alert - *Candida auris* - Increased Transmission in U.S.

Healthcare Facilities

Action Requested:

- Be aware that an emerging fungal pathogen, [*Candida auris*](#), is spreading 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), Nevada (3), the Mid-West and East Coast.
- Be aware of growing concerns for multidrug-resistant *C. auris* infections in the U.S.
- 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](#).
- 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.
- Coordinate *C. auris* screening and testing with Public Health. Confirmed and suspect cases are immediately notifiable to Thurston County Public Health and Social Services. If you have a confirmed or suspected case, please call 360-867-2500 Monday-Friday between 8am and 5pm excluding holidays or after hours call 1-800-986-9050. For non-emergent calls regarding *C. auris* screening in Thurston County please leave a message on the Communicable Disease Reporting Line at 360-786-5470.
- 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 has started offering proactive *C. auris* screening to residents at long-term ventilator capable healthcare facilities. These are the settings which have been impacted heavily in California and East Coast outbreaks.
- Immediately report any suspected or confirmed *C. auris* cases or outbreaks to [Public Health](#).
 - *C. auris* becomes a notifiable condition in WA as of January 1, 2023.

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- **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*. Contact Thurston County Public Health and Social Services.
 - 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 19, 2022, *C. auris* has not been detected in Washington but represents a serious threat to vulnerable patients. This [map](#) 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

1. Oregon Health Authority News Release. OHA investigating state's first cases of *Candida auris* infection. Dec 28, 2021.
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDHS/bulletins/3030234>
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>

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3. Causey K. *Candida auris* technical bulletin April 22, 2022.
https://dpbh.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dpbhnavgov/content/Resources/TB_C-auris_042222.pdf
4. Prestel C, Anderson E, Forsberg K, et al. *Candida auris* Outbreak in a COVID-19 Specialty Care Unit — Florida, July–August 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021;70:56–57. DOI
5. Lyman M, Forsberg K, Reuben J, et al. *Notes from the Field: Transmission of Pan-Resistant and Echinocandin-Resistant Candida auris in Health Care Facilities — Texas and the District of Columbia, January–April 2021*. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021;70:1022–1023. DOI.
6. Adams E, Quinn M, Tsay S, et al. *Candida auris* in Healthcare Facilities, New York, USA, 20132017. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2018;24(10):1816-1824. DOI.

Resources

- [Candida auris resources](#), Washington State Department of Health
- [Candida auris testing information](#), Washington State 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

THANK YOU FOR REPORTING

TO REPORT A NOTIFIABLE CONDITION IN THURSTON COUNTY	
Voice mail for reporting non-immediately reportable conditions (24 hours a day)	Phone: 360-786-5470 Fax: 360-867-2601
Day time immediately reportable conditions – Call detailed information to the 24-hour Notifiable Condition Reporting Line at 360-786-5470. Messages are picked up hourly. If a call back can't wait call 360-867-2500 and ask staff to locate a Communicable Disease staff.	Phone: 360-786-5470
After hours immediately and 24-hour reportable conditions or a public health emergency	Call 1-800-986-9050
No one is available with Thurston County Public Health and condition is immediately notifiable	1-877-539-4344

Communicable Disease Updates are posted online at: <http://bit.ly/CDUpdatePHSS>