Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Candida auris

This information explains *Candida auris* (*C. auris*), including how it spreads and how it's treated.

What is Candida auris?

C. auris is a fungus (type of germ). It is resistant to many anti-fungal medicines used to treat fungal infections. Resistant means medicine won't work to get rid of it or might not work as well as it should. *C. auris* can lead to other problems, such as:

- Pneumonia
- Blood infections
- Wound infections

What is the difference between being colonized and being infected with C. auris?

You can either be colonized or infected with *C. auris*.

Colonized

If you are colonized with *C. auris*, the germ is in your body, but you won't have any symptoms. You may have positive cultures from other sites, such as blood.

Infected

If you are infected with *C. auris*, the germ is in your body, and you'll have symptoms. You may have positive surveillance swabs from the axilla (armpit), nares (nostrils), or groin. The groin is where your upper thighs meet your abdomen (belly).

How *C. auris* spreads

Most *C. auris* infections are spread by direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids. These include:

- Blood.
- Drainage from a wound.
- Urine (pee).
- Bowel movements (poop).
- Sputum (thick mucus you cough up).

It can also spread if you touch equipment or surfaces that have come in contact with the germ.

Risks of *C. auris*

C. auris mostly affects people who are sick and need complex medical care.Healthy people have a lower risk of getting *C. auris*. You're more likely to get a *C. auris* infection if you:

- Have a weakened immune system.
- Have chronic illness, such as cancer or diabetes.
- Have been treated with antibiotics in the past.
- Have had a recent surgery.
- Have had repeated or long stays in the hospital.
- Have open wounds or sores.
- Have invasive medical devices in your body, such as breathing tubes, feeding tubes, catheters in a vein, and urinary catheters.
- Recently got healthcare in a country where *C. auris* is more common.

Symptoms of a *C. auris* infection

Symptoms of *C. auris* can be similar to symptoms of a bacterial infection, but are not specific to *C. auris*. The most common symptoms of a *C. auris* infection are:

- A fever of 100.4° F (38.0° C) or higher.
- Chills that don't get better after treatment.

How to diagnose C. auris

There are two ways to diagnose *C. auris*:

- **Colonization screening.** Your healthcare provider will swab your skin near your armpits and groin. They will send the swab to a laboratory for testing.
- **Clinical specimen testing.** Your healthcare provider will take a blood or urine sample if you have symptoms of an infection of unknown cause. They will test for many types of infections including those caused by bacteria. The results may show that you have *C. auris*.

How to treat a *C. auris* infection

Most *C. auris* infections are treated with antifungal medicine(s). Your healthcare provider will decide which medicine(s) to give you based on where you have an infection. They will prescribe medicine(s) that the germ it not resistant to.

How to stop a *C. auris* infection from spreading while you're in the hospital

Isolation precautions are steps we take to stop infections from spreading from person to person. If you have a *C. auris* infection while you're in the hospital, your care team will move you to a private room.

Staff and visitors

All staff and visitors must wear a gown and gloves while in your room. They can get these outside of your room. They should throw them away inside your room. All staff and visitors must clean their hands after leaving your room.

You can have art or massage therapy in your room while following isolation precautions.

We will put a sign on your door telling all staff and visitors to clean their hands before going into your room. They can wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Leaving your room

If you leave your room for tests, you must wear a gown and gloves or be covered with a clean sheet. If you leave your room to walk around the unit, you must wear a gown and gloves. You won't be able to go to the following areas of the hospital while you still have an infection:

- Pantry on your unit.
- The Charles Hallac Patient Recreation Center on M15.
- Pediatric recreation area on M9.
- The Teen Lounge (TYA Lounge) on M14.

While you're on isolation precautions, do not use other public areas, such as:

- Visitors lounges on the inpatient units.
- The hospital cafeteria
- The main lobby.

You can walk in the halls with proper personal protective equipment (PPE). You must practice good hand hygiene, especially washing your hands with soap and water. You cannot have contact with other patients or the areas they are in while you're infected with *C. auris*.

At home

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Do this especially after using the bathroom, or having contact with blood, urine, or drainage from a wound.

Wipe any surfaces that may have come into contact with the fungus, such as a

doorknob. Use a bleach-based disinfectant, such as Clorox® or Lysol®.

Family members, your care team, and other close contacts should clean their hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water. Have them do this before and after touching you or equipment in your room while you're infected with *C. auris*.

More information

If you have any questions, talk with your healthcare provider. You can also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/index.html for more information.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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