

## HEALTH ALERT

### *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) – Ohio, 2021

August 12, 2021

#### Summary and Action Items

- The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), in collaboration with public health and healthcare partners, is investigating a cluster of three cases of *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) infection. This is the second time clinical cases have been reported in Ohio.
- *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 spread in healthcare settings.
- Ohio healthcare facilities, including hospitals and nursing homes, should be alert for cases of *C. auris* infection or colonization, and implement appropriate screening procedures to ensure timely and accurate detection of *C. auris*.
- Laboratories should review [CDC guidance](#) on appropriate testing methodologies for the correct identification of *C. auris*.

#### Background

ODH, in consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and in collaboration with local health departments, is working with healthcare partners to investigate a cluster of three cases of *C. auris* infection in an acute care setting. This is the second time clinical cases have been reported in Ohio, with an additional two previously reported cases of colonization.

*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 spread in healthcare settings. *C. auris* can cause severe healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) including blood, respiratory, wound, and urinary infections. While patients or residents who are colonized with this fungus are often asymptomatic, about 5-10% of individuals with *C. auris* will develop invasive infection within one year of colonization. Invasive *C. auris* infections have been associated with 30-60% mortality rates among hospitalized patients. Most deaths have occurred in persons with other serious illnesses that increased the risk of death.

Key components for controlling the spread of *C. auris* include rapid identification of infected or colonized patients, notification of public health partners, implementation of effective transmission-based infection control precautions, and thorough environmental disinfection.

#### Recommendations for Ohio 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 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 of southern or central Indiana, northern Kentucky, Florida, Texas, or Washington, D.C., with extended stays in healthcare facilities (acute care and long-term care), due to recent outbreaks of *C. auris* in those areas.
  - Residents of [states with historically high incidence](#) of *C. auris* who also have extended stays in healthcare facilities (acute care and long-term care).
- **Notify public health partners:**
    - *C. auris* is a Class B reportable condition. Facilities should report a case, suspect case, or positive laboratory result to their local public health department by the end of the next business day. Jurisdiction is based on the location of the case at the time of diagnosis (not the jurisdiction of residence). For example, a resident of another state diagnosed with *C. auris* in an Ohio facility would be considered an Ohio case.
  - **Implement effective [transmission-based infection control precautions](#) for care of patients with suspected or confirmed *C. auris*:**
    - Use standard and contact precautions.
    - House the patient in a private room.
    - Use enhanced barrier precautions with other patients or residents at increased risk for transmission.
  - **Clean and disinfect the environment:**
    - For patients with suspected or confirmed *C. auris*, conduct daily and terminal cleaning of the patient's room with a disinfectant known to be effective against *C. auris*; refer to the [United States Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) List P](#).

#### **Recommendations for Laboratories**

- Review [CDC guidance](#) on appropriate testing methodologies for the correct identification of *C. auris*. (*C. auris* is often misidentified as other types of yeast, depending on which laboratory methods are used.)
- Report positive lab findings and suspected cases to infection control or local health department per your facility's procedures.

#### **Local Health Department Actions**

- Report a case or suspect case to ODH via the Ohio Disease Reporting System.
- Contact the HAI Program at HAIAR@odh.ohio.gov or 614-995-5599 for assistance with infection prevention recommendations, screening, and surveillance.
- For the most up-to-date information about *C. auris*, visit the CDC website [here](#).