

## Information for patients and visitors

# *Candida auris* (*C.auris*)

### What is *Candida auris*?

*Candida* is a family of fungi (yeasts) that live on the skin and inside the human body. *Candida auris* (also called *C. auris*) is an uncommon fungus that can cause serious infections.

The types of infections caused by *C. auris* are no different from those caused by other types of *Candida*; however, *C. auris* infections are serious because they can be more difficult to treat than other *Candida* infections. *C. auris* can also spread more easily to other patients in hospital.

### How do you get *C. auris*?

In Australia, *C. auris* infection is rare. Most of the cases reported in Australia to date have been from patient admissions to hospitals overseas where there are many more cases of this fungus making it easier to become infected.

Some people carry the fungus on their body without it causing any symptoms or an infection. This is called colonisation. People who are carrying *C. auris* may not know they have it and can pass the fungus to another person. It can spread on equipment that has been shared between patients or through contamination of the environment. It can also get into the body during medical treatment including operations or when urinary catheters or intravenous lines are inserted into the body.

*C. auris* is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

### Why is *C. auris* a problem?

*Candida auris* is a problem because:

- > it causes serious infections
- > it can be difficult to treat as it is often resistant to many of the regular medicines used to treat this type of infection
- > it is difficult to identify in the laboratory
- > it can cause outbreaks in hospitals and residential aged care facilities.

### Will *C. auris* make me unwell?

In most people *C. auris* is harmless and are colonised and does not cause infection. However, in some people, such as those whose immune system is weak or compromised, *C. auris* can become a serious problem. It may cause serious bloodstream, urine, wound or ear infections.

### Is there treatment for *C. auris*?

Most *C. auris* infections are treatable with antifungal drugs called echinocandins. However, some *C. auris* infections have been resistant to all of the three main types of antifungal medications, making them more difficult to treat.

In this situation, multiple antifungals at high doses may be required to treat the infection. Your doctor will provide more specific information regarding any treatment you may require.



## What will happen if I have *C. auris*?

If you are found to have *C. auris*, your healthcare team will continue to provide the same level of care. In addition, the following extra precautions will be taken while you are in hospital to prevent the spread of *C. auris*:

- > You will be moved to a single room and a sign will be placed on your door to remind health care workers who enter your room to wear a gown and gloves.
- > Your room will have an ensuite or be allocated a bathroom that is not shared.
- > You will be asked to stay in your room where possible, unless you need to be transferred for tests or treatment.
- > If you leave your room, you will need to wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before entering or leaving your room.
- > You should try to avoid touching any areas of broken skin or wound dressings, to reduce the risk of spreading infection.
- > An alert will be placed in your hospital record to alert staff if you are admitted another time that extra infection control precautions are required.

## If I have *C. auris*, can I have visitors?

Your family and friends can visit you. However, to prevent the spread of *C. auris* to other patients or the environment, it is important that all your visitors wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before entering and leaving your room each time.

Your visitors should also follow these precautions:

- > do not eat or drink whilst visiting in the patient's room
- > do not use the patient's designated hospital bathroom (or ensuite)
- > avoid visiting any other patients in hospital immediately after visiting you.

**If visitors or family help you with care such as assistance with dressing or showering, then they may be asked to wear gloves and a gown.**

## What should I do if I require admission to hospital or receive health care in the community?

If you go to another healthcare facility, healthcare provider (e.g. doctor or physiotherapist) or have home care services, you need to tell them that you have *C. auris*. This will assist them to ensure they provide adequate care for you. Take your hospital discharge summary with you. There is no need to inform other community-based facilities or businesses that are not healthcare-related (e.g. public swimming pool).

Patients with a *C. auris* infection will usually be treated with antifungal medicines. No special treatment is required for patients found to be carrying *C. auris* without any symptoms or signs of infection.

## What will happen when I go home?

To prevent the spread of *C. auris* to other people when you are at home, it is important that you follow these general hygiene practices:

- > Always wash your hands with soap and water and dry thoroughly:
  - after going to the toilet
  - before preparing and eating food
  - before and after touching any wounds or medical devices that you may have.
- > Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
- > Cover any skin wounds whenever possible.
- > Keep surfaces such as benchtops, bathrooms and toilets clean.

No special requirements are needed for your clothing and towels, eating utensils and dishes. They can be washed in the normal way using detergent or laundry powder. Extra disinfectant is not needed.

**Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you**

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## For more information

Communicable Disease Control Branch  
**Telephone: 1300 252 272**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/infectionprevention](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/infectionprevention)

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