

First Confirmed Case of *Candida auris* Reported in North Dakota

The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) received a report of a case of *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) in Barnes County, North Dakota. This fungus can be challenging for laboratories to identify, is often resistant to many types of anti-fungal drugs making it difficult to treat. This case is believed to have acquired *C. auris* from healthcare received out-of-state. *C. auris* can cause severe illness and spread easily and rapidly in healthcare facilities. Both infected and colonized patients can spread *C. auris*. **Providers in the state are encouraged to screen for *C. auris* in anyone who has a history of receiving health care outside of North Dakota, who have had an overnight stay in a Long Term Acute Care Facility or Long Term Care Facility or received complex medical care in [areas of the United States](#) with high incidence of *C. auris* in the past 12 months. Providers should contact HHS at 701.328.2378 to report confirmed or suspected cases of *C. auris* immediately. Providers should not wait for laboratory results to report.**

Through an Infection Control Assessment and Response (ICAR) and interviews, HHS Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) team determined that there were appropriate transmission precautions in place at the healthcare facilities where care was received. No patient notifications of potential exposure are needed and no additional cases of *C. auris* have been identified.

Symptoms and Treatment of *C. auris*

Patients can carry *C. auris* on their body, even if it is not making them sick, which is called colonization, and do not require treatment. If someone develops an infection with *C. auris*, their symptoms might not be noticeable because patients with the infection are often already sick in the hospital with another serious illness or condition. Symptoms will depend on the part of the body affected, such as bloodstream, wound or ear infections. Because symptoms can vary a laboratory test is needed to determine whether a patient has a *C. auris* infection.

C. auris patients often have many medical problems, with weakened immune systems or have devices like tubes going into the body. Healthy people, including healthcare workers, usually don't get *C. auris*. While *C. auris* is often resistant to some medications used to treat infections with fungus, most *C. auris* infections can be treated with a class of medications called echinocandins.

Transmission of *C. auris*

Patients can spread *C. auris* from their body to other people or nearby objects like surfaces or medical equipment, especially in healthcare settings such as hospitals and nursing homes. Spread can occur even when patients are not sick and are only colonized with the fungus living on their skin.

C. auris lives on surfaces for a long period of time. Not all disinfectants kill *C. auris*, so it is important **all** facilities have an [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered disinfectant](#) in their facility that has a kill claim for this organism and educates staff on the use of the product.

Providers and healthcare workers should use special precautions around patients known to have *C. auris* to reduce the chance of spreading the fungus to others. This should include a private room and bathroom, contact precautions, ensuring good hand hygiene is performed by providers and all care givers, family/visitors and the patient and detailed environmental cleaning is performed frequently adhering to contact time of disinfectant on the EPA P list.

Communication

It is very important communication is open between health care facilities and providers regarding the identification of the *C. auris* identification and, if possible, patient's charts should be flagged to notify other providers/facilities of the status to ensure transmission precautions continue to remain in place.

Screening

Screening patients for *C. auris* is an important way to prevent or stop outbreaks in a healthcare setting and keep patients safe. Contact Laboratory Services with questions regarding *C. auris* screening at 701.328.6272.

Providers and laboratories should save *C. auris* specimen samples for additional testing to assist HHS in the investigation of transmission.

Please contact the HHS Healthcare Associated Infections Team at 701.328.2378 or after hours at 701.328.8660 with questions or suspect cases of *C. auris*.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- [Health Alert](#) conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
- [Health Advisory](#) provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
- [Health Update](#) provides updated information regarding an incident or situation, no immediate action necessary.
- [Health Information](#) provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.