

Candida auris

This leaflet is for patients, relatives and visitors and explains what Candida auris is, how it is spread, and how it can be prevented and treated.

What is Candida auris?

Candida auris (*C. auris*) is a type of micro-organism (germ). There are lots of micro-organisms on our skin and in air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Most of them are harmless, some are beneficial and a very small proportion can cause harm.

Candida is a large family of fungi that lives on human skin and inside the body. *C. auris* is much less common than other types of Candida. Some people carry Candida, but do not know because they have no symptoms and it does not harm them. This is known as 'colonisation' and we call these people 'carriers'.

Candida and other micro-organisms cause problems in hospitals. Complicated medical treatments, including operations and intravenous lines (drips), provide opportunities for micro-organisms to enter the body. Occasionally, a micro-organism can get into surgical wounds or the bloodstream and may cause serious infections that can be life-threatening and require treatment.

How do you test a patient for *C. auris*?

A nurse may take swabs from different parts of a patient's body to check if *C. auris* is present. This may happen when the patient arrives at the hospital or during a hospital stay. The parts of the body usually swabbed can include:

- the inside of the nose
- the groin
- the throat
- the axilla (armpit)

In certain cases other sites may be swabbed, such as a wound or catheter site, but this will be explained to you at the time of testing.

How *C. auris* is spread and what can be done to prevent it?

If people have *C. auris* on their hands, they can transfer it to people and objects that they touch. This allows other people to then pick it up on their hands. To prevent the spread of *C. auris*, we have a number of measures in place for staff. These include:

- hand washing before and after contact with every patient
- screening to identify patients who are carriers
- using single rooms for patients who are infected with, or are carriers of *C. auris*. If no single rooms are available, patients may be cared for together in a separate bay
- ensuring health professionals wear gowns, gloves and aprons when caring for patients who have infections or are carriers of *C. auris*
- cleaning surfaces and equipment that may be contaminated with *C. auris*

- patients' personal items should be kept to a minimum and stored in drawers or cupboards to keep the surfaces clear to allow for effective cleaning
- before entering and leaving the room, all staff and visitors must either wash their hands with soap and water and then use the alcohol foam sanitiser or foam sanitiser only if the hands are visibly clean

What will happen if I have *C. auris* infection or if I am a carrier?

A patient who carries *C. auris* may be treated with antiseptic shampoo and body wash to reduce or remove it from hair and skin. If you have an infection caused by *C. auris*, it is usually treated with antifungal medicines given through an intravenous line (drip).

Will having *C. auris* delay my discharge from hospital?

Having *C. auris* should not delay your discharge from hospital. If, as part of your treatment, you need to be transferred to another ward or hospital, there may be some delay if you require a single room.

What can I do to prevent the spread of *C. auris*?

The best way to prevent the spread of *C. auris* is to wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet and before eating food. You should also avoid touching any areas of broken skin or wound dressings.

What precautions should visitors take?

C. auris does not usually cause infections in healthy people. However, visitors should wash their hands before and after touching patients or anything around the bedside and they may be asked to wear gowns, plastic aprons and gloves.

When you go home

When you are discharged you can return to your normal routine. Laundry and dishes can be done as usual and no special cleaning is required.

If you receive care from nurses, doctors or therapists or are re-admitted to hospital it is important to inform them that you are colonised with *C. auris*.

Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about *C. auris*, please ask your nurse for further information or you can contact the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Infection Control team on 0118 322 6914, email: infection.control@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

How do I find out more?

Health Protection Team Tel: 0344 225 3861 <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>

Department of Health: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/candida-auris-a-guide-for-patients-and-visitors>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Simon Wells, RBFT Infection Prevention & Control, October 2022

Next review due: October 2024