Candida auris – a patient's guide

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.

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).

Patients who have C auris infection or are carriers are usually cared for in a single room while they are in hospital. This is to help prevent the spread of C auris to other patients.

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.

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.

What happens after I go home?

If you have an infection, it will be treated before you are discharged. If you are a carrier, no special measures or treatment are required when you go home. If you are admitted to hospital, you should let the hospital staff know that you are or have been a carrier.

Further information

Please speak to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns about C auris.