



**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) – Alert**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20221223-00589-ALT (Health Alert)
RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, PAs, and
Healthcare Providers – Statewide
Friday, December 23, 2022
SUBJECT: Ongoing Outbreak of Locally Acquired *Candida auris* Cases Identified
in Mississippi

Dear Colleagues:

- The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is investigating an ongoing outbreak of *Candida auris* (*C. auris*), representing the **first cases of locally acquired *C. auris*** in the state.
- *C. auris* is an emerging multi-drug resistant organism that is easily transmitted environmentally and person-to-person, especially in congregate settings like long term care facilities.
- **Ongoing transmission** of *C. auris* has been identified within a central Mississippi long term acute care facility. As of December 23, 2022, 3 cases of *C. auris* invasive infection, including two deaths, and at least 19 cases of *C. auris* colonization, have been identified among residents of this facility.
- Also linked to this outbreak, additional colonized individuals, and potentially one additional case of invasive infection, have been identified at other healthcare facilities in the state.
- **The investigation is ongoing and additional cases are likely to be identified.**
- MSDH is working closely with the impacted facilities to perform further surveillance screening testing and provide infection control guidance.
- **Additionally, MSDH is working with the facility with ongoing transmission to ensure appropriate notification to transferring facilities occurs. Facilities receiving admissions or transfers from affected facilities will be notified regarding *C. auris* status of the patient and the need for additional infection control measures.**
- **This is a serious and developing situation, all healthcare facilities should prepare now to ensure transmission of *C. auris* is contained.**
- *C. auris* is a serious threat because:
 - It causes serious infections, and more than 1 in 3 patients die within a month of being diagnosed with an invasive *C. auris* infection.
 - Antifungal medications commonly used to treat other *Candida* infections are often not effective against *C. auris*.
 - It is difficult to identify *C. auris* and it can be misidentified as other types of yeast unless specialized laboratory methods are used. Correctly identifying *C. auris* is critical for starting measures to stop its spread and prevent outbreaks.
 - **Because *C. auris* can colonize patients for many months, persist in the environment, and withstand some commonly used healthcare facility disinfectants, it can spread easily and cause outbreaks in healthcare facilities.**



- Early detection and infection control can limit the spread of *C. auris*.

MSDH is asking providers and healthcare facilities to:

- Prepare for *C. auris* in your facility:
 - Work with your laboratory to ensure your facility can identify *C. auris* and establish a protocol for prompt notification of your facility's infection control department when *C. auris* is identified or suspected.
 - If your lab cannot identify *C. auris*, know when to suspect *C. auris* and send suspected isolates to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for further identification. (<https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/identification.html>)
 - Know which patients are higher risk for *C. auris* infection or asymptomatic colonization, such as patients who have received healthcare in long-term acute care and post-acute care facilities (e.g., nursing homes).
- Have a response plan. Discuss recommendations for infection prevention and control of *C. auris* with healthcare personnel, including environmental services (EVS).
- If *C. auris* is identified or suspected in your facility:
 - Report suspected or confirmed *C. auris* test results immediately to MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725.
 - Send all suspected or confirmed *C. auris* isolates to the Mississippi PHL for further confirmation.
 - Initiate proper infection prevention and control for *C. auris* when a suspected or confirmed case is identified (<https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/c-auris-infection-control.html>)
 - Coordinate with EVS to ensure that the patient care environment is cleaned using a disinfectant from EPA list P (<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-p-antimicrobial-products-registered-epa-claims-against-candida-auris>), or with an EPA claim for *C. auris*.
 - **Quaternary ammonium compounds (QACs) may not be effective against *C. auris*, despite claims about effectiveness against *C. albicans* or other fungi.**
 - Clearly communicate about patient's *C. auris* status to receiving healthcare providers when transferring patient to another facility (e.g., nursing home or other hospital).

Please reach out to the Office of Epidemiology with questions or concerns.

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist



Additional Resources:

- Infection Prevention and Control for *Candida auris* <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/c-auris-infection-control.html>
- *Candida auris*: A drug-resistant fungus that spreads in healthcare facilities <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/pdf/C-Auris-Infection-Factsheet-H.pdf>
- Identification of *Candida auris* <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/identification.html>
- Healthcare Professionals FAQ <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/candida-auris/c-auris-health-ga.html>



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program: **MS Health Alert Network (MSHAN)**
Message Identifier: MSHAN-20221223-00589-**ALT**
Program (HAN) Type: **Health Alert**
Status (Type): Actual ()
Message Type: Alert
Reference: MSHAN-00589
Severity: Unknown
Acknowledgement: No
Sensitive: Not Sensitive
Message Expiration: Undetermined
Urgency: Undetermined
Delivery Time: 600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency: A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

Alerting Program: The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

Message Identifier: A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (**ALT=Health Alert**, **ADV=Health Advisory**, **UPD=Health Update**, **MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service**)).

Program (HAN) Type: 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; unlikely to require immediate action.

Health Info Service: Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

Status (Type):

- Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
- Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
- Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded

Message Type:

- Alert: Indicates an original Alert
- Update: Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
- Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled



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Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

Extreme:	Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe:	Significant threat to life or property
Moderate:	Possible threat to life or property
Minor:	Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown:	Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

Sensitive:	Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive:	Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration:

Undetermined.

Urgency:

Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time:

Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).