



Health Alert: Increase in *C. auris* in WA in 2024

Resources and Updates: Legionella, RSV Immunization, Pertussis, Heat and Smoke

July 1, 2024

Please review important updates from Skagit County Public Health.

NOTE: Our 24 hour Communicable Disease phone number is 360-770-8852.

Washington State Department of Health Alert: Increasing cases of *Candida auris* in WA in 2024

C. auris was first detected in Washington in 2023; 6 cases were reported but only 1 was locally acquired. During January through May 2024, 14 locally acquired cases were identified in Washington. Most cases have been linked to suspected transmission in a healthcare facility. However, isolated cases with no obvious healthcare-associated link have been identified in Eastern Washington. This may indicate undetected transmission of *C. auris* is occurring within Washington. **Therefore, we urge facilities and healthcare providers to take steps now to improve infection prevention programs and be prepared to accept *C. auris* patients and other potentially exposed patients coming from facilities with *C. auris* transmission.**

Actions Requested

- Be aware that meticulous adherence to routine healthcare infection prevention activities is effective in preventing the spread of *C. auris* in healthcare facilities.
- **Ensure your healthcare facility optimizes infection prevention practices that are proven to prevent transmission of *C. auris*, including [hand hygiene](#), [transmission-based precautions](#), [environmental cleaning](#), and [cleaning and disinfection of reusable medical equipment](#). (See also: [Recommendations for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities](#).)**

- Patients with suspected or confirmed *C. auris* in healthcare facilities should be managed using contact precautions and placed in a single room whenever possible. In nursing homes, consult with your [local health jurisdiction](#) about using [Enhanced Barrier Precautions](#).
- Reinforce and audit core [infection prevention practices](#) in healthcare facilities.
- When *C. auris* is suspected, use healthcare [disinfectants that are effective against *C. auris* \(List P\)](#). [List K products registered for use against *Clostridioides difficile* are also effective](#). Follow disinfectant instructions for use including proper precleaning, dilution, and wet time.
- Increase speciation of *Candida* from non-sterile sites, prioritizing urine cultures over wound and respiratory sources. Review *Candida* speciation options with your lab. All non-*albicans* *Candida* species can be sent to the [Washington Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory](#).
 - For laboratories working with suspect or confirmed *C. auris*, be aware of [safety considerations](#) including recommended personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfection, and disposal.
- Remain vigilant for any increase in *Candida* results in a patient care unit, including from non-sterile sites, and consider *C. auris*.
- Communicate information about colonization or infection with *C. auris* during care transitions within and transfers between healthcare settings. Consider using the [CDC Interfacility transfer form \(PDF\)](#).
- **Inquire about high-risk exposures in newly admitted patients and consider [C. auris screening](#) in patients at higher-risk for *C. auris*, including those who have had:**
 - Close contact in a healthcare setting to another patient with *C. auris*; or
 - An overnight stay in a healthcare facility outside the U.S. or in a region within the [U.S. with a high burden of *C. auris* cases](#) in the previous year.
 - Direct admission from a ventilator-capable skilled nursing facility or a long-term acute care hospital.
- When risk factors for *C. auris* are identified, **coordinate any *C. auris* screening with public health**. Testing at the public health lab requires preapproval from your [local health jurisdiction \(LHJ\)](#).
- **Be aware that public health offers proactive [C. auris screening](#) to hospitals and long term care facilities for certain patients or residents. Contact your local health jurisdiction to enroll in routine screening for *C. auris* and other targeted Multi-Drug Resistant Organisms (MDROs).**
- **Be aware that *C. auris* can be misidentified through commercial laboratory testing and [specific technology is needed](#) for correct identification.**

- **Consider an infectious disease consultation for [treatment options](#) for patients with invasive *C. auris* infections.** Even after treatment, patients generally remain colonized with *C. auris* for long periods, and sometimes indefinitely.
- **Immediately report any suspected or confirmed *C. auris* cases or outbreaks to [public health](#) and [submit isolates to the Public Health Laboratories](#).**

Background

Candida auris (*C. auris*) is an emerging, often multi-drug resistant yeast, that was first identified in 2009. It has spread globally and can cause difficult to control outbreaks in high acuity facilities among patients with invasive devices. *C. auris* may colonize patients longterm and also cause invasive infections. Both colonized and infected persons can transmit the organism in healthcare settings. ***C. auris* is not a risk to the general public nor to most hospitalized patients.**

Resources for providers from Washington DOH

- [General information about Candida auris](#)
- [Candida auris FAQ](#)
- [Candida auris notifiable conditions information](#)
- [How to enroll your facility in proactive screening for Candida auris](#)
- [WA DOH Multi-Drug Resistant Organism \(MDRO\) Dashboard](#)
- [WA DOH Multi-Drug Resistant Organism \(MDRO\) Prevention and Response Toolkit](#)
- [What to Do if you Identify a Targeted Multidrug Resistant Organism in your Facility \(PDF\)](#)

To report suspected cases, contact Skagit County Public Health at 360-770-8852. For questions email communicabledisease@co.skagit.wa.us.

Public Health Resources – Legionella, RSV Immunization, Pertussis, Summer Heat and Smoke

- **NEW:** [WA DOH Resource for Providers – Diagnosing Legionnaires’ Disease](#)
 - **UPDATED:** [CDC Recommendations for RSV Vaccination in Older Adults](#) - recommended for 75 and older and for high risk people aged 60-75.
 - **Pertussis** continues to surge and cause infections in Skagit County and the region. See [Key Messages for Healthcare Providers from WA DOH](#).
 - **Heat and smoke impact high risk individuals. Forecasts and updates can be found at:**
 - [Washington Smoke Blog – Wildfire Smoke Forecasts and News](#)
 - [National Weather Service Heat Risk Forecast and Risk Maps](#)
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Thank you for your partnership in keeping Skagit County healthy!



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