

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **IDPH Encourages Illinoisans to Take Precautions on Emerging Multidrug-Resistant Fungal Infections**

*IDPH offers recommendations on steps you and health care providers can take*

**SPRINGFIELD** – There is an emerging multidrug-resistant fungus called *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) that is causing healthcare-associated infections around the world, including the U.S. and in Illinois. Recent media attention is raising awareness of this multidrug-resistant fungus. While this infection is still rare in the U.S. and most people are at low risk of getting infected, IDPH is committed to ensuring Illinoisans and health care providers have the tools they need to stay safe.

“Our top priority at IDPH is keeping Illinoisans healthy and safe and we are working hard to ensure residents have the information and resources they need in response to all emerging health threats,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “Fungal infections caused by *C. auris*, and similar infections, have the potential to cause serious illness, are often resistant to standard medications, and continue to spread in health care settings. There are steps physicians, health care facilities, and individuals can take to avoid infection and prevent the spread of disease, and IDPH encourages all Illinoisans to get educated and stay safe.”

IDPH and local health departments are working with health care facilities to implement and maintain infection control practices to reduce transmission (cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces and shared equipment, hand hygiene, gloves, gowns, etc.). Public health officials are conducting surveillance for clinical cases and also screening individuals (swabbing the skin of patients/residents) in health care facilities where clinical cases have been found. These steps allow us to identify patients who may have come in contact with *C. auris*. In an effort to reduce further spread, public health officials have been in more than 100 health care facilities to actively investigate every clinical case to identify any possible exposures.

There are steps individuals can take when receiving medical treatment, whether it is in a hospital, a long-term care facility, or a clinic to help protect themselves from infection.

- When a doctor, nurse, or other health care worker enters the room, observe as they clean their hands.
- Patients and loved ones should make sure their hands are clean as well.
- Patients should feel comfortable inquiring if medical equipment was cleaned after being used on another patient (e.g. stethoscope or blood pressure cuff).

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- Check if the room and surfaces have been cleaned with the appropriate disinfectant
- Ask what steps the facility is taking to reduce the transmission of healthcare-associated infections.

People who get *C. auris* or other *Candidal* infections are often patients sick from other medical conditions. There is increasing evidence that the spread of *C. auris* may be particularly high in post-acute and long-term care facilities, especially long-term acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities that take care of patients on ventilators. Patients at higher risk for developing *C. auris* infection are those who require invasive medical care, including ventilators for breathing support, feeding tubes, central venous catheters, and also broad-spectrum antibiotics.

Symptoms of *C. auris* infection may not differ from those of other infections, and they vary depending on the part of the body that is infected. People can also have *C. auris* on their body without developing an infection or any symptoms. Even without symptoms, it is possible to pass *C. auris* to other people. People concerned that they may have a fungal infection or healthcare-associated infection should talk to their health care provider immediately.

*C. auris* can be highly resistant to antifungal drugs, meaning that medications used to treat *Candidal* infections often do not work against it. However, most *C. auris* isolates in Illinois have been treatable with all antifungals.

IDPH has provided clinical alerts to hospitals, providers, and laboratories – providing guidance on testing, patient management, and appropriate infection control recommendations.

IDPH continues to work diligently to educate health care facilities, physicians, and individuals about the judicious use of [antimicrobials](#) and actions that can help [prevent the spread](#).

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