

# HEALTH ADVISORY



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Region 4 Public Health**  
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum  
counties, and Cowlitz Indian Tribe

**To: Physicians and other health care providers**

**Please distribute a copy of this information to each provider in your organization.**

Questions regarding this information may be directed to the following Region 4 health officers:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH**

Health officer for Clark, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties

**Steven Krager, MD, MPH**

Health officer for Cowlitz County

## Alert categories:

**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; no immediate action necessary.

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### Summary

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Washington Department of Health (DOH) is reporting an increase in health care-associated *Candida auris* (*C. auris*) cases. Local transmission of *C. auris* was first reported in Washington in January 2024, and in July, DOH reported an increase in locally acquired cases. Since then, Public Health – Seattle & King County has identified facilities with health care-associated *C. auris* transmission.

Due to the increased number of facilities with ongoing transmission, DOH and Region 4 health officers recommend facilities and health care providers improve detection of *C. auris* by enhancing screening efforts and increasing speciation of *Candida* from non-sterile sites, strengthen infection prevention programs, and be prepared to accept *C. auris* patients and other potentially exposed patients coming from facilities with identified *C. auris* transmission.

Providers should be aware that *C. auris* testing is available at the Washington DOH Public Health Lab (PHL) and may be available in some commercial labs. Providers should contact their local health jurisdiction to arrange *C. auris* screening testing at PHL and to report cases of *C. auris* in their facility.

### Requested actions

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- Recommend admission screening for *C. auris* and carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPO) in patients with identified risk factors:
  - Close contact in a health care setting (see below) to someone diagnosed with *C. auris* or CPO infection or colonization.
  - Admitted with a stay of 24 hours or more in any health care facility that is experiencing transmission of *C. auris* or CPO. Exposure information may be available in a patient's electronic medical record in CareEverywhere and in Artificial Intelligence Discharge Agent (AIDA).
  - An overnight stay in the prior year in a health care facility outside the US or in a region of the US with a high burden of *C. auris* cases.
  - Direct admission from a ventilator-capable skilled nursing facility or a long-term acute care hospital.
  - Colonization or infection with a CPO.
  - Presence of a tracheostomy.
- Recommend *C. auris* admission screening and contact precautions in private room until screened negative for patients admitted from the following facilities:
  - Harborview Medical Center: admitted with an overnight stay since April 1, 2024; if available, see CareEverywhere flags with information about *C. auris* exposure and screening recommendations.

- Kindred Hospital: admitted in the prior six months.

Using contact precautions for these patients is the most cautious approach. If contact precautions are not feasible, the next most cautious action would be to use enhanced barrier precautions for both the screened patient and any roommate until screening is negative.

- Be aware that *C. auris* screening is available through the Washington PHL; see [Partners for Patient Safety](#) page for more information.
  - Coordinate screening at PHL with your local health jurisdiction (see contact information on last page).
  - Facilities may use a commercial lab if available and preferred as some major commercial labs in Washington now provide *C. auris* testing.
- Consider laboratory species identification of *Candida* isolates from non-sterile sites, prioritizing urine cultures over wound and respiratory sources. Review *Candida* species identification options with your lab. *All non-albicans Candida species* can be sent to the [Washington Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory](#).
- Facilities with active *C. auris* investigations and clusters should disclose potential for *C. auris* exposure and any screening results to receiving facilities when patients transfer care.
- Communicate patients' *C. auris* or CPO colonization or infection status when they transfer care. Consider using the [CDC Interfacility transfer form](#).
- When receiving patients in transfer, facilities should inquire whether the discharging facility has detected cases or transmission of *C. auris* or CPOs and use the information for decisions about need for transmission-based precautions and admission screening.
- Ensure your facility audits and 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](#).)
  - Manage patients with suspected or confirmed *C. auris* using contact precautions and place these patients 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](#). *C. auris* can quickly and easily colonize the patient's environment. For positive cases or exposed contacts, ensure any items that cannot be dedicated or disposed are disinfected and cleaned appropriately (e.g., x-ray machines, vitals equipment, blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, etc.).
  - When *C. auris* is suspected, use health care 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.
- Remain vigilant for any increase in *Candida* results in a patient care unit, including from non-sterile sites, and consider *C. auris*.

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

## Background

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*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, especially among patients with invasive devices and wounds. *C. auris* may colonize patients long term and also cause invasive infections. Both colonized and infected persons can transmit the organism in health care settings. *C. auris* is not a risk to the general public nor to most hospitalized patients.

## Resources

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- [General information about Candida auris](#)
- [Candida auris FAQ](#)
- [Candida auris notifiable conditions information](#)
- [Clark County Public Health Infection Prevention](#)
- [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](#)

**Thank you for your partnership.**

Local health jurisdiction	Phone	Fax
Clark County Public Health	564.397.8182	564.397.8080
Cowlitz County Health & Human Services	360.414.5599	360.425.7531
Skamania County Community Health	509.427.3850	509.427.0188
Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services	360.795.6207	360.795.6143

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