

# Understanding Candidemia



Candida is a type of yeast. Yeast is a type of fungus. This yeast is normally found in the body and causes no problems. If you have too much of it (overgrowth), it can cause conditions such as thrush or a vaginal yeast infection. If candida gets into the bloodstream, it can cause a serious condition called candidemia. It may also be called invasive candidemia. Once in the bloodstream, it can affect many body systems.

## Special note

One type of Candida called Candida auris or C. auris is especially dangerous. This is because the main types of antifungal medicines don't work against it. Candidemia caused by C. auris can cause serious illness and death. Most C. auris infections can be treated with a type of antifungal medicines called echinocandins.

Healthy people usually don't get C. auris infections. People with very weak immune systems are at higher risk. C. auris infection is becoming a greater problem in hospitals and nursing homes. People with C. auris infections in these settings will have special care precautions to reduce the chance of spreading the infection to others. This may include:

- Being in a private room away from other patients
- Having staff and caregivers wear gowns and gloves during care
- Having housekeeping staff clean the room with different cleaning products
- Having all visitors and staff wash their hands frequently. This includes having the patient wash their hands often.

## What causes candidemia?

Certain people are at greater risk for developing candidemia. This includes those who have:

- A weakened immune system
- Kidney failure or are on dialysis
- Diabetes

Other things that can increase your risk include:

- Having surgery
- Taking artificial nutrition
- Being a patient in the intensive care unit (ICU)
- Recent use of antibiotics
- Having a central venous catheter
- Injecting illegal drugs
- Taking corticosteroids
- Having severe burns

## Symptoms of candidemia

Candidemia often develops when you are already sick or in the hospital. This can make symptoms hard to recognize. Your healthcare provider may suspect candidemia if you have risk factors. The most common symptoms of candidemia are fever and chills. Other symptoms depend on whether it spreads to other parts of the body. This can include the eyes, heart, bones, and brain. You may also have skin sores (lesions) and tender muscles.

## Treatment for candidemia

Treatment for candidemia involves antifungal medicine given by mouth or through an IV (intravenous). Treatment may last 1 to 2 weeks or longer, until the Candida is no longer in the blood. Treatment starts as soon as your healthcare provider suspects you have candidemia. Because it can be life-threatening, they may not wait for test results to start treatment.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any risk factors for candidemia, had recent surgery, or have been in the hospital and have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Chills

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