

hand hygiene

I'm a Nightmare for Healthcare Facilities and I'm on the Rise

“Tests showed it was everywhere in his room, so invasive that the hospital needed special cleaning equipment and had to rip out some of the ceiling and floor tiles to eradicate it.”

—The New York Times, April 2019

You may have seen me in *The New York Times*. (I made the front page, don't you know?) But when I'm not gracing the covers of national media outlets, I'm busy lurking in hospitals and healthcare facilities, evading infection preventionists, and waiting to wreak havoc on the immunocompromised.

I'm an expert at hiding, not just in the body but also the environment. Thanks to a couple of different virulence mechanisms, such as biofilm formation, I can easily contaminate surfaces, hands, furniture, and clothing and stay alive for weeks.

I'm also commonly mistaken for my cousins, which can delay treatment and allow me time to set up shop in a person's body. I require specialized laboratory methods and technology in order to be accurately identified. Just another one of my tricks to evade detection.

When left untreated, I can cause serious bloodstream, ear, and wound infections. If I become invasive, I'm as deadly as they come, killing 1 in 3 people whom I infect, according to the CDC.

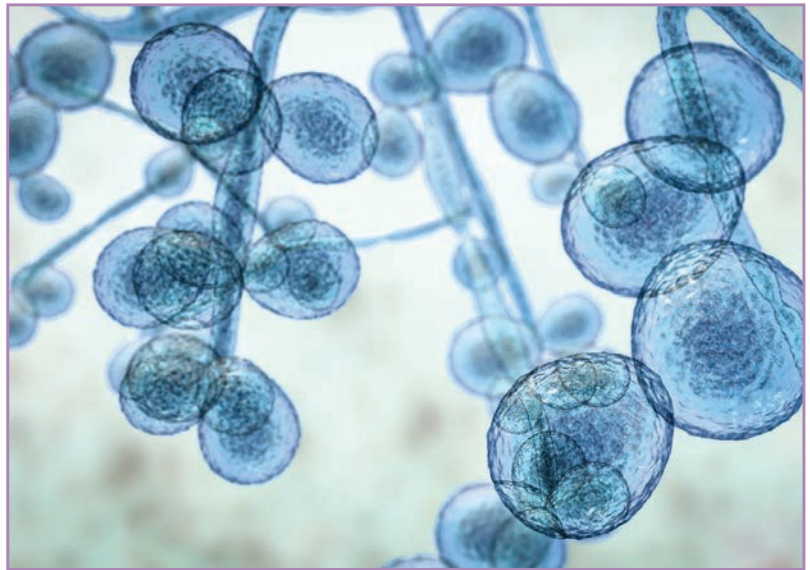
I come in many forms, or strains, which have been identified all over the world. Because I'm still a youngin' (first identified in 2009), scientists don't have me fully figured out yet. My biggest foes appear to be chlorine bleach, chlorhexidine, and povidoneiodine, but I have the uncanny ability to survive standard infection prevention procedures.

I've also developed a robust resistance profile. In 40% of cases, I am resistant to 2 or more drug classes, and 10% of the time I am resistant to all drug classes.

So far this year, I've racked up more than 765 case counts in the United States alone. Whole-genome sequencing of international specimens shows similarities within regions but differences across regions, which indicates that I, inexplicably, appear to have emerged independently in multiple countries around the same time.

Described as a “creature from the black lagoon” by investigators, I carry secrets about where I came from, but one thing is certain: I am not going anywhere anytime soon.

I might be the new kid on the block, but beware: I am a tenacious fungus. Be sure to follow contact precautions—such as adherence to hand hygiene practices and use of gowns and gloves—because I'll take advantage of any little slip. Catch me if you can!



Candida auris

Who am I? 