

Colonization Screening for *Candida auris*: Instructions to Collect and Submit Screening Specimens

New Jersey Department of Health

Candida auris (*C. auris*) is an emerging yeast pathogen that can cause significant morbidity and mortality among infected individuals and is often multidrug-resistant and easily spread in healthcare settings. Identifying patients who are colonized with *C. auris* is critical to stopping its spread. When a patient is identified with *C. auris* colonization or infection, close contacts, such as roommates and other individuals admitted to the same unit, should be screened for *C. auris* colonization. When transmission of *C. auris* is possible or suspected in a healthcare facility, a point prevalence survey (PPS) may be recommended to identify *C. auris* colonized patients and guide next steps.

This document outlines the procedure for New Jersey facilities to collect and package *C. auris* surveillance specimens, complete the necessary line list, and ship the specimens to the testing public health laboratory. All PPSs must be performed between Monday and Thursday so that the public health laboratory has sufficient time to process collection swabs. Facilities must follow these instructions to ensure that the public health laboratory will accept the specimens, process the collection, and test for *C. auris* colonization.

Note: Prior approval is required to submit swabs for *C. auris* testing. Facilities can contact the New Jersey Department of Health Communicable Disease Service (CDS) at DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov or 609-826-5964 to request *C. auris* colonization screening if transmission is suspected or exposures have been identified.

What Materials are Needed?

The supplies needed for collecting, packaging, and shipping the surveillance specimens will be sent to your facility via FedEx. Save the cardboard box and the Styrofoam insert (if provided) that were included with the supplies to send the supplies to you; you will re-use this box and Styrofoam insert (if provided) to ship the surveillance specimens to the public health laboratory for testing. Please check to ensure that the following supplies were included in your shipment.

- Specimen collection swabs for the number of patients that will be screened (i.e., one swab per patient screened)
- One biohazard bag per specimen collection swab/transport tube
- One sealable plastic bag for documents
- One to three cold packs (if provided) that must be placed in the freezer until shipping
- Instructions for specimen collection and packaging
- UN3373 Category B label (see example to the right)



If you are missing any of these supplies, please contact DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov.

Before Specimen Collection

In the 48-72 hours before specimen collection, discontinue all antimicrobial bathing on the patients to be swabbed. This includes chlorhexidine (CHG) baths, Theraworx, or other bathing products with antimicrobial claims. If antimicrobial therapies or topical antifungals are required as part of a patient's clinical care or per facility protocol, do not discontinue treatment for the purposes of swabbing, but do let CDS staff know as soon as possible so that additional swabs can be provided to enable nares swabs to be collected separately from axilla/groin swabs. If antimicrobial bathing or other topical antimicrobial products cannot be discontinued, each patient being screened should have two swabs collected instead of one: (1) a swab used for both nares, and (2) a composite swab used for both axilla and both sides of the groin.

Collecting the Swabs

On the designated day for specimen collection, collect one tri-composite swab, which consists of the nares, axilla, and groin, for each patient that should be screened. When collecting swabs, start with patients who are not suspected to have *C. auris* or other drug-resistant organisms, and move to patients on transmission-based precautions last (*i.e.*, moving from a 'negative cohort' to 'positive cohort'). Patients already known to have *C. auris* should not be included in the screening and should not undergo repeat testing for the purposes of clearing these individuals from transmission-based precautions. Specimen collection is easiest when at least two staff members are working together for each swab, such as the designated coordinator and the patient's nurse.

Please note: Staff should obtain patient consent as described in their facility policies. If the patient is uncomfortable with the swabbing of one body location, attempt to gain consent for the other locations. For example, if the individual consents to having their nares and axilla swabbed, but not the groin, that is acceptable. If this occurs, document this and notify your CDS point of contact which patients consent to which sites being swabbed.

Swabbing Instructions for Each Patient

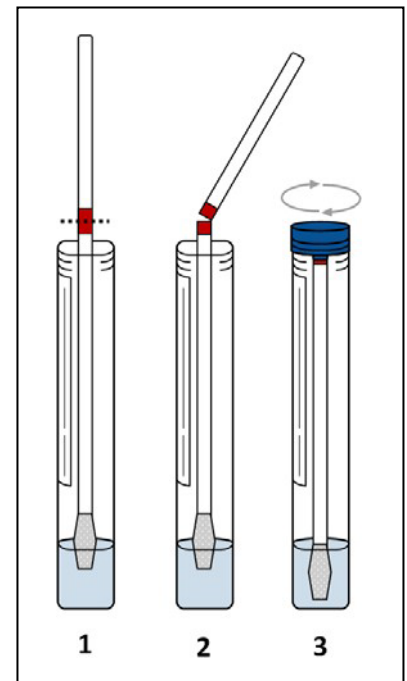
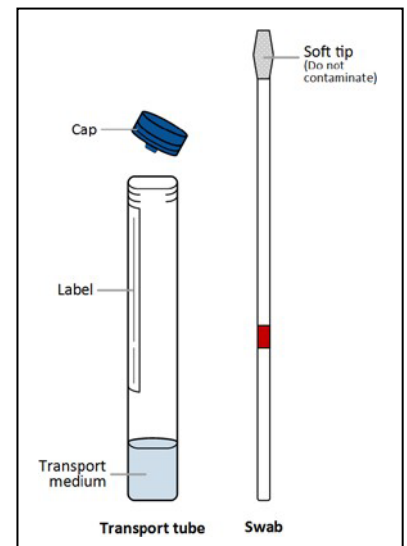
1. Before entering the patient's space, perform hand hygiene and put on any personal protective equipment (PPE) that is required, such as gloves or gowns.
2. Bring one swab package into the patient's space.
3. Open the swab package by grabbing the plastic at the opposite end from the soft tip.
4. Carefully remove the swab from the package without touching the soft tip.
5. First, begin with the nares. Rub the soft tip of the swab in a circular motion five times in the left nares; then use the same technique to swab the right nares. After, have the patient lift their left arm then rub the soft tip of the same swab over their axilla (armpit), swiping back and forth five times; then, use the same technique to swabs the right axilla (armpit). Take the same swab and rub the tip over the left side of the patient's groin (the area where their pelvic region and leg meet), swiping back and forth five times; then rub the right side of the groin the same way.

Please note: You may need to have another staff member help the patient lift their arms or move their legs.

6. Remove the cap from the transport tube that came with the swab and put the swab in the tube with the soft side going in first. Do not let the cap touch any materials that can contaminate the sample, like the patient's bed or clothes.
Note: You may need to have the assisting staff member wash their hands and hold the transport tube and cap to prevent contamination.
7. Find the red line at the end of the swab and bend the plastic handle against the transport tube, the end of the swab should snap off at the red line. (See image to the right).

Note: Do not tip the transport tube, because there is liquid in the tube that will spill out. If the liquid spills, collect another sample with a new swab and transport tube.

8. Securely tighten the cap of the transport tube. You may need to adjust the cap until the end of the swab slides into the center of the cap.



9. Place a printed patient label on the tube or **clearly** write the patient's name, date of birth, and medical record number on the tube. Any tubes that cannot be identified by the laboratory cannot be processed and will be discarded.
10. Conduct hand hygiene, dispose of any PPE that was used, and exit the patient's space.
11. Place the sealed and labeled specimen tube in a biohazard bag, putting one specimen in each bag. Seal the bag and place it in a designated location (such as a specimen collection cart). Specimens should be stored at room temperature or refrigerated until they are shipped. *Please note:* any specimens that are not able to be shipped out the day of specimen collection should be refrigerated at 4 degrees Celsius until shipment.

Completing the Line List

Every swab successfully collected must be logged electronically on the provided line list, which is an Excel file. This file should have been sent to you electronically. If you do not have a copy of this file, contact

DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov.

Please note: the line list template spreadsheet cannot be altered or modified in any way; any changes made to the template makes the file no longer compatible with the online test order system, so do not make *any* changes to it.

Each swab that is collected should get its own line on the spreadsheet. **Only include individuals who participated in the PPS and successfully had specimens collected.** For each swab, enter the following information on to the highlighted cells on the spreadsheet (column titles are highlighted):

- Specimen Source Type (Column B – the default is Nares/Axilla/Groin Swab; please alter if patients did not have all sites swabbed)
- Submitter Specimen ID (Column D – this can be the patient's medical record number if Specimen ID is not applicable)
- Submitter Patient ID (Column E – this can be the patient's medical record number)
- Collection date (Column F – this is the date the specimen was collected)
- Patient's last and first name (Columns H and I)
- Patient birthdate (Column J – formatted as MM/DD/YYYY without any extra spaces)
- Patient sex (Column K)
- Patient state (Column V – should be listed as "NJ" to reflect where the specimen was collected)
- NYS County (Column X – should be listed as "Out-of-state")
- Outbreak Code (Column AN – should be listed as "NJ-CAURIS-PPS" for screenings conducted following an exposure or case identification and for prevention PPSs; should be listed as "NJ-CaurisAdmScrn" for any screenings conducted upon patient admission)
- Facility contact Information (Columns AJ, AO, AP, AQ and AX)
- Isolate (Column AY – should always be listed as "No" as this field is used to indicate if the specimen is a clinical isolate, NOT if a patient is placed on contact isolation)
- Notes (Column AZ – If CHG, Theraworx, or other antimicrobial soaps could not be withheld, please document; if this is an admission screening specimen, please specify "Admission Screening" in the notes column)

Submitting the Completed Line List

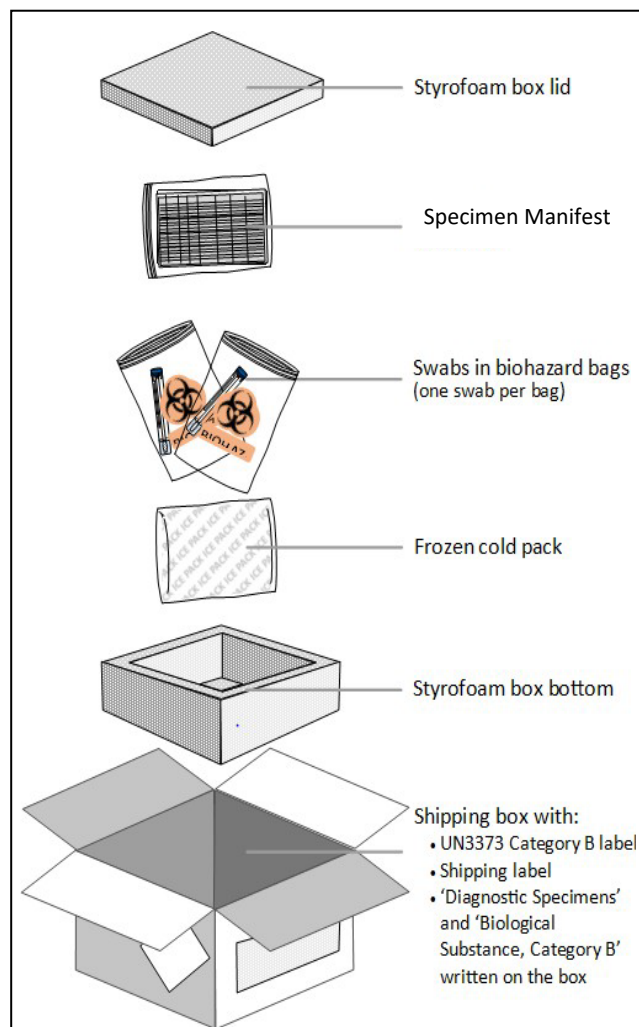
Once the spreadsheet is completed, securely email (encrypted) to the staff at CDS at DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov.

If you do not have the ability to send encrypted emails, you can upload the spreadsheet to our secure electronic submission portal at: <http://healthsurveys.nj.gov/NoviSurvey/n/GFAT.aspx> and immediately send an email to DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov to let the team know the completed line list has been uploaded to the NoviSurvey portal. Upon receipt of the line list, CDS will provide the shipping label and the shipment manifest. Print both the manifest and shipping label for inclusion and use during specimen shipment.

Packaging the Collected Specimens

After all swabs have been collected, clearly labeled, and the swab manifest and shipping label have been printed, prepare the package for shipment:

1. Ensure that the cap of each transport tube containing a swab is firmly closed and clearly labeled with information that matches the information provided on the specimen manifest.
2. Place one swab in each biohazard bag. Firmly seal each bag.
3. If a Styrofoam specimen cooler has been provided:
 - Open the box, remove the cold pack(s) from the freezer and place them in the bottom of the Styrofoam insert.
 - Place the biohazard bags containing one swab each on top of the cold packs.
 - Place and seal the printed specimen manifest in the plastic bag that was provided and place it in the Styrofoam box.
 - Place the top on the Styrofoam container.
4. If no Styrofoam specimen cooler has been provided:
 - Gather all individually bagged specimens and place them into a second sealed biohazard bag.
 - Place the biohazard bags containing all collected swabs into the cardboard shipping container.
 - Place and seal the printed specimen manifest in the plastic bag that was provided and place it in the shipping box.
 - To the extent possible, minimize or fill any empty space within the shipping container with bubble wrap or other soft packaging to prevent movement and damage of specimen tubes during transport.
5. Close and seal the cardboard box with tape.
6. On the outside of the box, place the UN3373 Category B label in a visible place and write 'Diagnostic Specimens' and 'Biological Substance, Category B' on the outside of the box. Finally, tape the shipping label.



Please note: It is very important that surveillance specimens are packaged according to these instructions. Patient swabs are considered a Biological Substance, Category B, and there are packaging and labeling requirements for these specimens. Requirements include leak-proof triple packaging for swabs, including an absorbent material, and boxes must be labeled with the provided materials. If these instructions are not followed, packages may be rejected for shipping or testing.

Shipping the swabs

Through the Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory Network, CDS is able to provide shipping labels for facilities to send colonization screening swabs for *C. auris* testing via FedEx Priority Overnight. The healthcare facility is responsible for shipping the patient swabs on the same day that they were collected to ensure that the specimens are received for testing as soon as possible. Facilities can ship the package one of three ways:

1. Drop off the sealed container to the nearest FedEx drop-off location.
Note: the package must be dropped off at an express pickup location. Facilities can find their closest location at: www.fedex.com/locate.
2. If your facility has a regularly scheduled FedEx pickup, you can drop the package of swabs at this pickup location.
Note: the package must be dropped off at the location before the daily pickup time.
3. Call 1.800.GoFedEx (1.800.463.3339) to schedule a same-day pickup. Facilities should call for a same-day pickup before 1pm on the day of pickup.

Questions or concerns?

Call the Communicable Disease Service at 609-826-5964 or email DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov

***Candida auris* Colonization Screening Checklist**

New Jersey Department of Health

Swab collection and swab manifest

- ☐ Swabs collected from every patient and labeled with every patient's name, date of birth, and medical record number
- ☐ Complete line list for all swabs
- ☐ Send line list to CDS by secure email or upload the spreadsheet to the secure electronic submission portal available at:
<http://healthsurveys.nj.gov/NoviSurvey/n/GFAT.aspx>
- ☐ Print swab manifest and shipping label

Packaging and shipping checklist

- ☐ Biohazard bags filled and sealed with one patient swab per bag
- ☐ Box packed and sealed with:
 - ☐ Packaging peanuts, bubble wrap or Styrofoam box
 - ☐ Cold pack(s) (if provided)
 - ☐ Biohazard bags with patient swabs
 - ☐ Swab manifest in a sealed bag
- ☐ Labels taped or written on the outside of box:
 - ☐ UN3373 label attached
 - ☐ "Biological Substance, Category B" (clearly written with a black permanent marker)
 - ☐ "Diagnostic Specimens" (clearly written with a black permanent marker)
 - ☐ Shipping label
- ☐ Package delivered to or picked up by FedEx

Do you have everything you need?

- ☐ Shipping box
- ☐ Collected swab specimen(s)
- ☐ Biohazard bags
- ☐ Bag for documents
- ☐ UN3373 Category B label
- ☐ FedEx shipping label (sent electronically & printed)
- ☐ Swab manifest (sent electronically & printed)

Questions or concerns?

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