

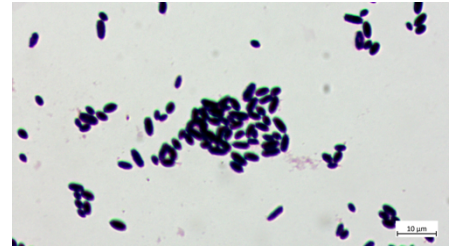
Outbreak Alert: *Candida utilis* Outbreak at NICU, BHU Hospital

Ongoing Outbreak Affecting 160 Neonates

A yeast outbreak has been reported at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) since January 2023, affecting **160 neonates**. The causative agent was identified as *Candida utilis*, a yeast species not typically associated with human infections.

About *Candida utilis*

- *Candida utilis* is a non-pathogenic yeast, commonly used in industrial applications, such as:
 - Biofuel production
 - Food processing
 - Bioremediation
- It is rarely associated with human infections, making this outbreak a significant concern, particularly in a vulnerable population like newborns.



Key Details of the Outbreak

- **Duration:** January 2023-January 2025
- **Location:** BHU Hospital NICU, Varanasi, India
- **Causative Agent:** *Candida utilis*
- **Signs of Infection:** Premature low birth weight babies with sepsis.
- **Number of Affected Patients:** 160 cases
- **Affected Area:** Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

Investigation and Intervention

- Hospital authorities have taken prompt action to control the outbreak, including:
 - Thorough environmental and terminal disinfection
 - Increased hand hygiene
 - Audit measures to monitor infection control protocols
 - Cohort nursing to isolate affected patients
 - Training and retraining of healthcare workers on infection control procedures, and initiated an investigation into the outbreak.
- An investigation into the outbreak has been initiated to determine the source and extent of the infection.

Ongoing Response

- The hospital authorities are working to contain the outbreak and prevent further spread of the infection.
- **ICMR Advanced Molecular and Diagnostic Research Centre for Fungi at AIIMS Bhubaneswar** has been involved in conducting comprehensive molecular characterization and typing studies on the isolated organism.

- AIIMS Bhubaneswar will help confirm the species identification and assess the pathogenic potential of *Candida utilis*.

Implications

- This unusual outbreak highlights the importance of maintaining robust hospital infection control protocols to prevent and respond to **emerging fungal threats**.
- Continued vigilance and monitoring are crucial to ensuring the safety of patients, especially in high-risk settings like NICUs.
- The investigation's findings will contribute to a better understanding of *Candida utilis* as a potential pathogen in hospital environments and help strengthen infection prevention strategies for preventing similar outbreaks in the future.

The hospital continues to monitor the situation and provide updates as more information becomes available.