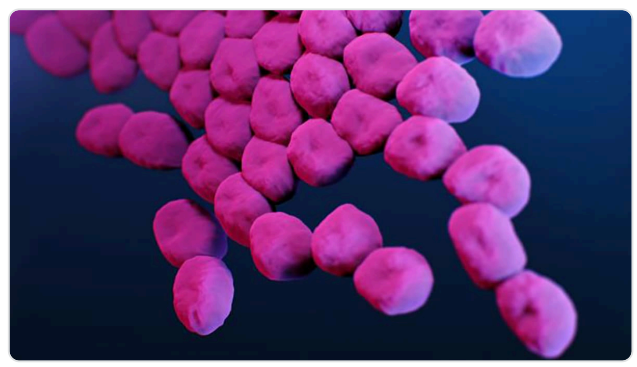
APRIL 11, 2024

About *Acinetobacter*

KEY POINTS

- Infections caused by *Acinetobacter* typically occur in healthcare settings.
- Good hand hygiene and infection prevention practices can help reduce infection risk.
- *Acinetobacter* germs can be resistant to antibiotics, making them difficult to treat.



What it is

Acinetobacter is a group of bacteria (germs) commonly found in the environment, like in soil and water. Infections caused by *Acinetobacter* rarely occur outside of healthcare settings.

Types

Germs in the *Acinetobacter baumannii* family account for most *Acinetobacter* infections in humans. This type is sometimes referred to as "*Acinetobacter baumannii* complex."

Signs and symptoms

Acinetobacter baumannii can cause infections in the blood, urinary tract, lungs (pneumonia) or wounds. In some cases, people can carry the bacteria without being infected, known as colonization.

At-risk populations

In the United States, patients in healthcare settings are at highest risk, especially those who:

- Are on breathing machines (ventilators).
- Have devices such as catheters.
- Have open wounds from surgery.
- Are in intensive care units.
- Have prolonged hospital stays.

People who have weakened immune systems, chronic lung disease or diabetes may be more susceptible.

How it spreads

Acinetobacter can spread in healthcare settings through:

- Contact with contaminated surfaces.
- Contact with contaminated equipment.
- Person-to-person contact, often via contaminated hands.

Reducing risk

Patients and caregivers should:

- Keep their hands clean by regularly washing their hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, including before and after caring for wounds or touching a medical device.
- Remind people (including healthcare providers) to clean their hands before touching the patient or handling medical devices.
- Allow healthcare staff to clean their room daily when in a healthcare setting.

Healthcare providers should always follow core infection control practices to reduce the risk of spreading these germs to patients.

Testing

To determine if someone has an *Acinetobacter* infection, healthcare providers will send a specimen to the laboratory for antimicrobial susceptibility testing. This test can also determine what treatment will work best.

Treatment

Acinetobacter infections are generally treated with antibiotics. To identify the best antibiotic to treat a specific infection, healthcare providers will send a specimen to the laboratory and test the bacteria against a set of antibiotics to determine which are active against the germ. The provider will select an antibiotic based on the test results and other factors, like potential side effects or interactions with other drugs.

Unfortunately, many *Acinetobacter* germs are resistant to multiple antibiotics, which makes them difficult to treat.

What CDC is doing

- Providing testing to identify antimicrobial resistance cases, measure resistance and track transmission in a healthcare setting through the Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network.
- Tracking *Acinetobacter* infections through the Emerging Infections Program.
  - Data is also available on the AR & Patient Safety Portal.
- Working closely with health departments, other federal agencies, healthcare providers and patients to prevent infections caused by *Acinetobacter* and slow the spread of resistant germs.

Resources

- Reference Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (AST) Data

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)