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What is *Acinetobacter*?

Acinetobacter is a group of bacteria commonly found in soil and water and sometimes found on the skin of healthy people. There are many types or “species” of *Acinetobacter* that can cause human disease. The species *Acinetobacter baumannii* accounts for about 80% of reported infections. Outbreaks of *Acinetobacter* infection typically occur in hospital intensive care units (ICUs) and healthcare settings with very ill or disabled patients. *Acinetobacter* infection rarely occurs outside of healthcare settings.

What are the symptoms of *Acinetobacter* infection?

Acinetobacter can live on or in a patient without causing infection or symptoms, but can also potentially cause a variety of diseases, including lung infections (“pneumonia”) and blood, wound, or urinary tract infections. Typical symptoms of pneumonia could include fever, chills, or cough. Symptoms of a bloodstream infection might include fever, chills, vomiting, and confusion. A wound infection might cause fever and redness, increasing pain, and pus around the wound. Symptoms of a urinary tract infection include frequent urination, pain or burning during urination, blood in the urine, cloudy or foul-smelling urine, and altered mental status. In very ill patients, *Acinetobacter* infection can cause or contribute to death.

Who gets *Acinetobacter* infection?

Acinetobacter poses very little risk to healthy people. People who have weakened immune systems, chronic lung disease, or diabetes are more susceptible to *Acinetobacter* infection. Hospitalized patients, especially those who are very ill, have open wounds, have an invasive device, are on ventilators, or are in the hospital for a long time are also at greater risk for *Acinetobacter* infection.

How does *Acinetobacter* spread?

Acinetobacter is spread by contact with a person or environment that has the bacteria. In healthcare facilities, the bacteria can spread from workers’ hands or contaminated surfaces or healthcare items.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Symptoms of *Acinetobacter* infection can appear from 4-40 days after exposure to the bacteria, but usually appear within about 12 days.

How is *Acinetobacter* infection treated?

Commonly prescribed antibiotics often do not work to treat *Acinetobacter*. Treatment decisions are made on a case-by-case basis by a healthcare provider.

What can be done to prevent the spread of *Acinetobacter* infection?

Acinetobacter can live on the skin and can survive in the environment for several days. Careful attention to hand hygiene and environmental cleaning can reduce the risk of spread. People who work in hospitals and other healthcare settings follow special infection control measures to prevent the spread of these bacteria.

How can I get more information about *Acinetobacter*?

- If you have concerns about *Acinetobacter*, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at the [VDH Local Health Districts page](#).
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [the CDC's page on *Acinetobacter*](#).

August 2018