

## **BURKHOLDERIA CEPACIA (B. CEPACIA)**

### **Overview**

Burkholderia cepacia, or B. cepacia, is a group of bacteria found in soil and water. It can cause serious respiratory infections in patients who are susceptible to illness. Several non-respiratory B. cepacia outbreaks have been linked to contaminated medical products.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

Symptoms of B. cepacia infection vary and depend on the underlying health status of the patient. Severe respiratory infections can occur, especially in people with lung conditions such as cystic fibrosis. Infections at other sites, such as the bloodstream, may occur as well.

The signs and symptoms of bloodstream infection include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Redness
- Swelling
- Pain

### **Causes and Transmission**

Since the early 2000s, several B. cepacia outbreaks have been caused by contaminated medical products. This includes liquid docusate in 2016, contaminated mouthwash in 2005, and contaminated over-the-counter nasal spray in 2004. It can also be spread by person-to-person contact, contact with contaminated surfaces and exposure to B. cepacia in the environment.

### **Risk Factors**

B. cepacia usually does not cause illness in healthy people. However, people with weakened immune systems or chronic lung diseases, particularly cystic fibrosis, may be more likely to become sick with B. a infection. The bacteria is also a known cause of infection in hospitalized patients.

### **Tests and Diagnosis**

The only way to identify a B. cepacia infection is to collect and test appropriate specimens in the laboratory. For example, a doctor might collect a blood sample for testing if he or she thinks a person has a bloodstream infection. The laboratory can also test to determine which antibiotic will be the most effective to treat the illness.

## **Treatment**

B. cepacia infections can be treated with antibiotics. Laboratory testing can determine which antibiotics are effective for treatment. Some B. cepacia bacteria have become resistant to certain antibiotics and can be difficult to treat. In such cases, the antibiotic used to treat illness may need to be changed or a patient may need to take antibiotics for a longer period.

## **Prevention**

The best way to prevent the spread of B. cepacia, and all infections, is to clean your hands often. This includes washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand rub.

Health care workers should follow specific infection control precautions.

Patients and health care workers should clean their hands often, including:

- Before preparing or eating food
- Before touching their eyes, nose or mouth
- After using the restroom
- After blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing
- Before and after changing wound dressings or bandages
- After touching hospital surfaces such as bed rails, bedside tables, doorknobs, remote controls or the phone

For additional information, visit [www.cdc.gov/HAI/organisms/bCepacia.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/organisms/bCepacia.html).