



Durham Region Health Department Facts about...



Pseudomonas

What is it?

Pseudomonas infections are a variety of illnesses that can be caused by the bacteria *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. *Pseudomonas* can cause skin, ear, eye, lungs, bone and joint, urinary tract, and blood infections. *Pseudomonas* bacteria, including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, are present in soil and water. These bacteria favor moist areas, such as sinks, toilets, inadequately treated swimming pools and hot tubs.

How is it spread?

Pseudomonas aeruginosa lives in the environment and can cause illness in people when they are exposed to water or soil that is contaminated with this bacteria. Resistant strains can also spread in healthcare settings from one person to another through contaminated hands, equipment, or surfaces.

What do I look for?

Pseudomonas aeruginosa causes many different infections which range from minor external infections to serious, life-threatening disorders. Swimmer's ear (i.e., external otitis) is a mild external infection that causes itching, pain, and sometimes a discharge from the ear. Malignant external otitis is a more severe external ear infection where tissues become swollen and inflamed, partly or completely closing the ear canal. Symptoms may include fever, loss of hearing, inflammation of tissues around the infected ear, and severe ear pain. Hot-tub folliculitis is when hair roots (follicles) become infected in people who use hot tubs or whirlpools. Infections may also include those of the eyes, soft-tissues, lungs (i.e., pneumonia), bone and joint, and blood. Infections occur more often and tend to be more severe in people who are immunocompromised.

How is it treated?

Infections caused by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are usually treated with antibiotics. Some serious infections (such as malignant external otitis or bloodstream infections) may require treatment with intravenous antibiotics.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How can I protect myself?

- Wash your hands frequently and properly to prevent the spread of Pseudomonas. Use warm running water and soap, rubbing together for at least 15 seconds, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Only go to pools, hot tubs, and spas with good cleaning and maintenance records.
- Depending on the severity of your infection, your health care provider may ask you to avoid activities that put others at risk, particularly if you work closely with others.
- Avoid sharing personal hygiene items, such as towels, bandages, razors, and anything else that may have contacted body fluid.
- If you have a cut or a wound on your body, keep it clean and covered.

More information can be obtained from

Durham Health Connection Line 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

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