

Yeast Infections (Candida or Monilia)

What is a yeast infection?

A yeast infection is an irritation to the vulva and vagina usually caused by *Candida Albicans*. Yeast is normally present in the mouth, digestive tract, and the vagina in small amounts. However, stress, illness, and certain changes in a woman's body may cause the yeast to grow in unusually large amounts.

- Yeast infections are very common, especially in pregnant women, and most women will have one at some point in their lives.
- Yeast infections are not usually sexually transmitted; however, some women or men may develop a yeast infection after having intercourse.

What are the symptoms of a yeast infection?

Symptoms may include:

- an increased vaginal discharge that may be thick and white, sometimes described as "cottage cheese-like"
- mild to severe vaginal itching or burning
- an unusually strong or unpleasant vaginal odor
- frequent urination

Why do we get yeast infections?

There are many things which can upset the healthy balance of a woman's body and allow a yeast infection to occur. These include:

- a weakened immune system, stress, a lack of sleep, an unhealthy diet, smoking or illnesses
- antibiotics
- birth control pills or other hormone treatments
- wearing damp underwear or tight pants
- normal hormonal changes during pregnancy
- uncontrolled Diabetes or eating sugary foods
- using douches or vaginal products such as sprays or creams

Yeast infections are not usually contracted through sexual intercourse, however, men may get yeast infections or what is commonly known as "jock itch". There are over-the-counter preparations (sprays and creams) men may use to treat "jock itch". They can usually find these products near the skin treatments sections of drug stores or pharmacies.

How can I prevent yeast infections?

You can reduce your chances of getting a yeast infection by:

- washing only your external vaginal area every day with mild, non scented soap
- wiping front to back to avoid spreading bacteria from the anus to the vagina
- avoiding the use of douches or vaginal products, including talcum powder
- wearing clean, dry, cotton or cotton-lined underwear
- not wearing panty hose or tight pants, especially during warm weather
- taking care of yourself: getting the proper amount of sleep, eating healthfully, and moderating the amounts of sugar and alcohol in your diet
- taking a daily probiotic or eating a lactobacillus containing yogurt every day

What can I do to treat a yeast infection?

If you have been diagnosed with a yeast infection, one of the following treatments will be advised:

- A Diflucan prescription will be called in to the pharmacy you request. Be sure to read all directions and warnings. Take one tablet by mouth one time.
- You should purchase an over-the-counter medication such as Monistat- 7, Gyne Lotrimin, or Miconazole 2% Cream. Insert one applicator full of cream before bedtime for seven days. Although Vagisil and other products may relieve itching temporarily, they should not be used as a primary treatment.
- Many yeast creams and suppositories may weaken latex condoms or diaphragms, so you should not rely on latex contraceptives to prevent pregnancy or the transmission of infection while on this medication.

For all of these treatments **it is important that you continue the treatment for the full course even if it looks or feels like the infection has gone away** to ensure that it will not return. **If you do not get better after the full treatment, or if the infection recurs within two months of treatment, return to the clinic immediately since this may indicate need for further evaluation.**

For more information visit: American Social Health Association at <http://www.ashastd.org/> Center for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/>