

Vaginal Yeast Infection (Candida)



What is a yeast infection?

A yeast infection happens when too many yeast cells are growing in the mucous membranes. Common places for yeast infections are within the vagina, and around the foreskin of the penis. Yeast infections are not usually serious and are easily treated.

About 75% of people will have at least 1 yeast infection in their lifetime and 5-10 % of individuals with vaginas will have more than 1. About 5% of the population experiences recurrent yeast infections, meaning 4 or more times a year.

What causes yeast infections?

Yeast is a fungus that normally grows in the vagina. Most vaginal yeast infections (about 90%) are caused by a type of yeast called candida albicans. A type of bacteria that lives in our bodies, called lactobacillus acidophilus, helps prevent overpopulation of yeast cells from growing. When there is an imbalance of lactobacillus acidophilus, there can be an overgrowth of yeast cells which can cause a yeast infection.

Some common causes of yeast infections include:

- Being sexually active
- Taking antibiotics
- Pregnancy
- Using corticosteroids
- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Being immune-compromised

Symptoms

Up to 20% of individuals can have an overgrowth of yeast cells in their vagina and not show any symptoms. If someone has symptoms, they often occur during the week before their menstrual period.

Symptoms include:

- Odourless vaginal discharge (white, cottage cheese-like)
- Vaginal itchiness and/or soreness
- Pain or burning when urinating
- Pain during sex
- Dry , flaky, itchy skin under the foreskin or at the tip of the penis
- Irritation or redness under the foreskin or at the tip of the penis
- Pain when urinating

How do you get tested for a yeast infection?

A swab is used to take a sample of the vaginal discharge or urethral area of the penis and is sent to the lab. Test results are usually available within 1 week.

How are yeast infections treated?

Treatment is not necessary if you aren't having any symptoms. If symptoms are mild, they may go away on their own. If treatment is required, over-the-counter antifungal medications can be used to treat yeast infections.

Treatment is available in several different forms, including creams, oral medication, or vaginal suppositories. Symptoms usually go away within 2-3 days. Treatment is 80-90% effective. If this form of treatment doesn't work, see your health care provider for prescription medication.

NOTE: The oils in some creams and suppositories can weaken latex condoms. Don't rely on condoms for birth control when treating a yeast infection.

Are there things I can do to prevent yeast infections?

- Wipe front to back to avoid spreading bacteria from the rectal area to the vagina
- Use mild, unscented soap and water to clean vaginal area and rinse well
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing (can increase body heat and moisture in the vaginal area)
- Wear underwear made out of cotton (synthetic underwear holds in heat and moisture)
- Change out of a wet swimsuit as soon as possible
- Don't use deodorant tampons or pads
- Change pads and tampons often
- Don't douche as this can cause irritation and imbalances of the vaginal flora
- Don't use feminine sprays