

YEAST INFECTION

What is a yeast infection?

A yeast infection is usually caused by a normally occurring fungus found in the vagina (*Candida albicans*). This fungus can overgrow due to a lack of protective bacteria or any change in the normal healthy vaginal environment.

What are the symptoms of a yeast infection?

Symptoms may include a white or yellowish-colored discharge that can be thick (like cottage cheese), itching and irritation to the vagina and vaginal opening, a burning sensation with urination or intercourse and redness or swelling around the opening of the vagina (vulva).

What causes a yeast infection?

Any change in the normal healthy vaginal environment can cause a yeast infection. Yeast infections may be caused from taking antibiotics, a change in hormones, pregnancy, uncontrolled diabetes, or from an impaired immune system.

How do I find out if I have a yeast infection?

Your healthcare provider will visually examine your external genitals, vagina and cervix for signs of infection. A sample of discharge may be collected to look at under a microscope to identify the fungus.

How is a yeast infection treated?

Yeast infections can be treated with the use of an antifungal (azole) medication that can be found over-the-counter in the form of creams, ointments or suppositories, or with prescription creams or pills. Vaginal treatment for yeast infections come in one, three or seven-day applications. Do not stop using your medication if symptoms go away. Be sure to finish the full treatment or the infection may return. Continue the treatment even if you have your period. Avoid using tampons when using medication in the vagina as they can soak up the medication and make it less effective. The oil-base in the medication may weaken latex condoms and diaphragms. Side effects may include mild burning or irritation during the application of the medication.

Oral medication (Fluconazole) is also an option. It is usually taken in a one-time dose by mouth.

How do I avoid getting a yeast infection?

Boric acid suppositories placed in the vagina daily for one week can often keep yeast from developing. You can make your own by filling a size 0 or size 00 capsule with boric acid powder.

Probiotics may be recommended by your healthcare provider to help prevent the recurrence of vaginal yeast infections. Probiotics work by restoring the normal “friendly” microbes in the vagina that can be destroyed by antibiotics or other influences. Probiotics can be found over-the-counter at the pharmacy. Choose probiotics that require refrigeration. Ask the pharmacist for help if needed.

You may want to try the following to reduce your risk of vaginal yeast infections:

- Avoid douching
- Wear cotton underwear and loose fitting clothes
- Avoid leggings, tights, nylons and pantyhose
- Don't wear underwear at night
- Limit use of hot tubs or very hot baths
- Change out of wet clothes as soon as possible after swimming or working out
- Limit the amount of sugar and refined carbohydrates in your diet

