

Avoiding Vaginal Yeast Infections

What is a yeast infection?

A yeast infection is also called candidiasis. It is caused by a fungus that usually lives in the vagina and the rectum. You don't have to have sexual activity to get a yeast infection. Men can also get yeast infections. The following situations can make you more likely to get a yeast infection:

- taking antibiotics (Do not stop taking your medication unless your doctor tells you to do so.)
- being pregnant
- using certain types of oral contraceptives (the Pill)
- having diabetes
- wearing tight clothing
- having your period (You may get a yeast infection just before or just after your period.)

Some of the symptoms of a yeast infection in women are:

- thick, curdy, white discharge
- vaginal itching or burning
- itching, burning or inflammation of the vulva
- a yeasty smell
- painful intercourse
- occasional painful urination

Some of the symptoms of a yeast infection in men are:

- inflammation around the scrotum or upper thighs ("jock itch")
- itching, swelling or inflammation on the head of the penis



What to do

If you have never had a yeast infection before, see your doctor or go to a Sexual Health Clinic. Doctors usually treat yeast infections with vaginal anti-fungal suppositories that are inserted in the vagina. In some cases, they prescribe oral medication. If you recognize the symptoms because you have had a yeast infection before, you may want to buy non-prescription, anti-fungal vaginal treatment from the pharmacy. However, if your symptoms do not go away, or if they become worse, you should see your doctor or go to a Sexual Health Clinic.

If it happens again

You may need to get another medical opinion if you keep getting yeast infections. Here are some other ideas:

- Avoid glycerine-based vaginal lubricants.
- Try to keep a healthy immune system by getting enough rest, eating properly and exercising.
- Avoid douching and feminine hygiene sprays.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Avoid wearing tight pants or synthetic workout clothes because they will keep moisture in. This helps yeast grow.
- Some people believe avoiding yeast, wheat, dairy and fermented foods (e.g., alcohol, vinegar, etc.) may help, but this hasn't been proven.

For some women, some types of contraceptives such as diaphragms, spermicides and some birth control pills may increase their risk of getting a vaginal infection.

Other info sheets in this series:
Avoiding bladder infections
Avoiding vaginal infections
Dealing with bacterial vaginosis
Normal vaginal fluids
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