

Yeast Infection

What is Yeast and What Causes It?

- Yeast vaginitis is the second most common vaginal infection after bacterial vaginosis
- 75% of women experience an episode of vaginal yeast infection at some time in their life
- Yeast infections are caused by fungal organisms.
- The majority of vaginal yeast infections are caused by *Candida Albicans*
- There are some less common yeast organisms such as *Torulopsis Glabrata* that may cause infections that do not clear up with the usual therapies
- Yeast infections may be more common in women who have taken antibiotics, are on hormonal contraception, have diabetes and or are pregnant.
- Women who have medical conditions or take medicines which weaken the immune system are at greater risk for yeast

Signs and Symptoms of Yeast Vaginitis

- Yeast infections may cause no symptoms
- Sometimes yeast is noted on a Pap test and does not require treatment, unless there are symptoms
- There may be increased vaginal discharge with yeast infection
- This is typically described as thick or curdy
- There may be mild to moderate itching and irritation
- If the genital skin becomes very irritated, it may become red, swollen and may develop splits.

How is yeast diagnosed?

- The symptoms of thick curdy discharge, itch and irritation are classic for yeast
- Recent antibiotic use or steroids may suggest the possibility of yeast
- The health care provider will perform a vaginal exam and observe the genital skin
- The acid base level of the vagina is generally normal
- Samples of vaginal discharge may be taken with a swab
- The sample will be evaluated under the microscope for the presence of yeast
- Even when yeast is present, it is only seen under the microscope half the time
- Seeing yeast under the microscope confirms the diagnosis, but if yeast is not seen, the infection may be treated based on the symptoms

- @ In some cases, a culture may be sent to the laboratory by swabbing the vagina and placing it in a culture tube.
- The culture is more accurate than the information that is obtained under the microscope and takes a few days to get the results
- A culture is used when a woman has a complicated problem such as failure to clear her infection or repeated infections.

Treatment of Yeast Vaginitis

- Over the counter medications can be obtained without a prescription
- These include creams for the external genital skin, suppositories and creams for the vagina that are inserted with an applicator
- Caution should be used when self-treating for yeast
- Women who have been previously diagnosed for yeast and develop similar signs and symptoms may consider choosing to obtain over the counter treatments
- If a woman does not improve, she should seek the advice of a health care provider.
- Women who have frequent yeast infections may need to be treated for longer than the usual length of time
- If you have frequent yeast infections you may want to discuss longer treatment with your practitioner
- If you are pregnant, you should be sure to consult with a health care practitioner

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

- Yeast is generally not sexually transmitted. It is not necessary to treat a male partner in most cases
- Yeast infections are common in pregnancy and may be treated with the advice of the health care practitioner
- Yeast infections are common in healthy women. If there is no other reason for concern, it is unlikely that HIV or Diabetes testing is indicated.

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