



Yeast Infection

What is a yeast infection?

Yeast is a very common fungus that normally exists in a woman's vagina. If there is an overgrowth of yeast or candida, symptoms may appear. Men with a yeast infection may develop inflammation of the head of the penis or have other symptoms.

How is yeast spread?

Yeast is not considered a sexually transmitted infection; however it can be spread through sex.

What are the symptoms?

Women

Some women may experience the following:

- White, thick "cottage cheese-like" vaginal discharge
- Mild to severe vaginal itching and burning
- Burning of the external genitalia when urinating
- Red, sore labia (vaginal lips)
- Pain with intercourse
- Some women do not have symptoms.

Men

Some men may experience the following:

- Irritation, redness at tip of the penis or under the foreskin
- Pain when passing urine
- Dry, itchy skin on the genitals
- Most men do not have symptoms

How is Yeast diagnosed?

A vaginal swab is taken. Yeast sometimes shows up on a woman's Pap test. With men; usually the doctor makes the diagnosis by simply examining the penis.

How is it treated?

Yeast infections are usually treated with oral medication, vaginal creams or suppositories. These can be purchased without a prescription at a drug store. However, you should see a doctor to ensure that it is indeed a yeast infection before treating yourself. Treatment of male partners is usually unnecessary. If men are uncomfortable, they can use the creams as well. The infection will clear up faster if there is no sexual intercourse during treatment. Medication will almost always cure yeast infections. However, you can get the infection many times. Yeast infections are more common during pregnancy or when a woman is on birth control pills or antibiotics.

How can yeast infections be prevented?

- Wear cotton underpants; avoid nylon underpants, pantyhose and tight jeans because they tend to hold moisture in the genital area and encourage the growth of yeast.
- Keep the genital area clean and dry; wash with plain water or a mild soap.
- Wipe from front to back, so you do not bring rectal bacteria into the vaginal area.
- Do not use bubble baths, oils, and commercial hygiene sprays.
- Do not douche, because it can irritate the vaginal lining and increase the risk of infection.
- Do not use deodorant tampons and pads.
- Eat balanced meals and try to stay away from foods high in sugar

Is follow-up important?

Follow-up is not necessary unless symptoms come back.

Things to Think About

- Yeast infections can increase the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV
- Yeast may be confused with bacterial vaginosis. Get tested by a health care provider.

References:

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