



Vaginal Candidiasis (Yeast Infection)

What is vaginal candidiasis?

Women normally have some yeast cells and other bacteria that live on their skin, in their intestine (gut), and in their vagina. When there is too much yeast in your vagina, you can have a thick, whitish discharge and vaginal itching, burning, and redness. This is called vaginal candidiasis or a vaginal yeast infection.

How would I get a yeast infection?

You can have too much yeast in your vagina for many reasons. Yeast grows best in dark, moist areas. Tight clothes, wet clothes, and nylon underwear keep the vagina moist, which helps yeast grow. Yeast can also grow when the normal bacteria in the vagina change, which can happen if you take antibiotics. Hormone changes during pregnancy or when you take birth control pills can also make yeast infections more likely. Yeast infections can be passed between sex partners, but sex is not a common way for women to get a yeast infection.

How can I keep from getting yeast infections?

Wear cotton underwear to keep moisture out of your vagina. Materials like nylon pantyhose, polyester pants, and wet bathing suits can keep the vagina moist. Avoiding using panty liners may also help prevent yeast infections. Do not use scented soap or scented powder around your vagina, or take bubble baths. These products can irritate your vagina. Do not douche. Douching removes healthy bacteria that protect your vagina from having too much yeast.

What is the difference between uncomplicated and complicated yeast infections?

Many healthy women get a yeast infection a few times during their life. An uncomplicated yeast infection does not occur often and does not cause severe pain. You can get medicine over the counter at a drugstore to treat this kind of yeast infection. Complicated yeast infections are a yeast infection that happens 3 or more times in a year, one that does not get better after being treated, or one that causes severe pain. Women who have some health problems, such as diabetes or HIV, have a higher chance of getting a yeast infection that is complicated.

How do I treat a yeast infection?

Most yeast infections are treated with a cream, suppository, or tablet that is inserted in your vagina. The medicines are used for 1 to 7 days depending on which one you get. One-day treatments should only be used for mild infections. If you are having a lot of burning or itching, get a medicine that is used for 3 or 7 days. Sometimes a yeast infection medicine that goes inside the vagina comes with a cream to put on your vulva (area around the opening to your vagina). The back of this handout has a list of yeast infection medicines you can buy over the counter.



How should I use the medicine for a yeast infection?

Wash your hands before and after you use these medicines. Insert the medicine high into your vagina. It may be easier to do this while you are lying down. Many yeast infection medicines are used at night just before you go to sleep. This helps the medicine stay in your vagina for several hours. Use the medicine for the entire time, even if you feel better before all the medicine is gone. Stopping the medicine too soon can cause the yeast infection to come back.

A slight burning of the skin or vagina is normal the first few times you use the medicine. It is also common to have more discharge while you are using the medicine. Many of the yeast infection medicines can cause latex condoms and diaphragms to get holes in them. That makes it easier for you to get pregnant or get a sexually transmitted infection if you have sex.

When should I see a health care provider?

You should see a health care provider if you:

- Have symptoms of a yeast infection for the first time.
- Are not sure if the symptoms you have are from a yeast infection.
- Have severe pain or your vulva has a lot of swelling or redness.
- Used an over-the-counter treatment and still have symptoms.
- Treated a yeast infection less than 2 months ago and have symptoms again.
- Have 3 or more yeast infections in less than 1 year.
- Are pregnant.
- Have diabetes, HIV, or another health problem that affects your immune system.

Over-the-Counter Medicines for Yeast Infections	
Medicine	How Long it is Used
Clotrimazole 1% cream	7-14 days
Clotrimazole 2% cream	3 days
Miconazole 2% cream	7 days
Miconazole 4% cream	3 days
Miconazole 100 mg vaginal suppository	7 days
Miconazole 200 mg vaginal suppository	3 days
Miconazole 400 mg vaginal suppository	1 day

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/candidiasis/genital/index.html>

Office on Women's Health

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/vaginal-yeast-infections>

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