

## **Yeast Infection** (Monilia, Candida, Fungus Infection)

### **What is a yeast infection?**

Yeast is a very common fungus (candida albicans) that normally lives on the skin and inside the body (most commonly the digestive tract). When this fungus overgrows in the vagina, it is called a yeast infection and can cause uncomfortable symptoms. Yeast is not considered a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

A healthy vagina is slightly acidic, and has some helpful bacteria, protecting against harmful bacteria or fungus. Yeast likes to live and grow in the dark, warm, moist environment of the vagina. It also likes estrogen, which is why yeast infections are more common in women, especially during the second half of the menstrual cycle, while taking birth control pills, during pregnancy or if taking antibiotics (antibiotics can reduce the helpful bacteria, allowing yeast to overgrow.) Overweight or diabetic women may also have more yeast infections.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Normal vaginal discharge is clear, milky white or yellowish in colour with a musky odour. Sometimes there are no symptoms. For those who do get symptoms, they can include:

Women:

- mild to severe vaginal itching and burning
- white, thick, dry, clumpy vaginal discharge
- red, sore and sometimes swollen labia (vaginal lips)
- pain and/or burning when urinating (peeing) and with sex

Men:

- irritation, redness or dry, flakey skin at tip of the penis or under the foreskin (if not circumcised)
- pain when urinating (peeing)

### **How is yeast diagnosed?**

A vaginal swab is taken and sent to a lab for testing. Yeast can also show on a Pap test. It is important to see a doctor and have a swab taken to know you don't have more serious infections that can have similar symptoms. For men, yeast is diagnosed by examining the penis.

### **How is it treated?**

There are many ways to treat yeast infections. Vaginal creams and suppositories (ovules) such as Monistat, Gynecure or Canesten can be bought at most drug stores without a prescription in 1, 3 or 7 day doses. If these do not work, a doctor may need to give you a prescription for stronger cream or pills. If men have symptoms, they can apply the same cream to the affected area of the penis.

Do not have sex during treatment and for the next week so you can heal properly. Many of these creams reduce the effectiveness of latex condoms and diaphragms during treatment and for 3 days after use.

### **Home remedies to treat or prevent vaginal yeast infections**

- Buy refrigerated lactobacillus acidophilus capsules at a health food store. The capsule can be swallowed or crushed/opened to mix with a small amount of water to make a paste. Insert the paste into the vagina on the end of a clean finger or with an applicator from a contraceptive foam or yeast cream package. This can help build the healthy bacteria in the vagina.
- Eat plain unsweetened yogurt containing lactobacillus. It can also be inserted with an applicator directly into the vagina at bedtime.
- Peel the skin from a clove of garlic, wrap it in cheesecloth or gauze and attach dental floss for string. Make sure the string is reachable and insert into the vagina at bedtime. Remove the garlic in the morning and throw it all in the garbage. Odourless garlic capsules are also available to make a paste as above or to take by mouth.
- Add a few drops of tea tree oil, 1 cup of vinegar or some baking soda in a shallow bath to soak your genital area.
- Place a cold compress or ice pack (such as a bag of frozen peas or a frozen juice can wrapped in a tea towel) to the vulva to cool the burning and itching.

### **How to prevent yeast infections?**

Vaginal health is very important to prevent infections and irritations. See other side for vagina health

**For more information, call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700 and ask for Sexual Health Information or visit**

[peelregion.ca/health](http://peelregion.ca/health)

[peelsexualhealth.ca](http://peelsexualhealth.ca)

[intheknowpeel.ca](http://intheknowpeel.ca)