

YEAST INFECTION FACT SHEET

What is a yeast infection?

Yeast is a very common fungus that normally lives on the skin and inside the body. Sometimes yeast can overgrow, causing an infection, and can cause uncomfortable symptoms in the genital area. It is very common and can affect anyone.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms include:

- severe itchiness on the inside or outside of the genitals (vagina, vulva, penis, scrotum, anus)
- thick, white, clumpy vaginal discharge
- burning or redness in the genital area (swollen labia)
- irritation, redness or dry flakey skin at the tip of the penis or under the foreskin (if not circumcised) similar to jock itch
- pain or burning when passing urine (peeing) or during sex

Factors that can put you at risk

Some factors increase the risk of having a yeast infection such as:

- hormonal changes (menstruation, pregnancy or menopause)
- certain medical conditions (diabetes or medical conditions which can weaken the immune system)
- antibiotics
- certain lifestyle habits

How is a yeast infection diagnosed?

It is important to see a doctor and have a swab taken to know you don't have a more serious infection. A sample of the vaginal discharge can be taken and sent to the lab. Yeast can also be diagnosed by examining the penis.

Yeast is sometimes confused with bacterial vaginosis (BV), but treatment is different. See your health care professional for testing.

Is there treatment for yeast infection?

Yeast is not harmful however the infection can be treated if symptoms are bothersome.

Most yeast infections can be treated with over-the-counter (OTC) antifungal medication, but it is best to see a health care professional before trying anything, especially if you are pregnant. Antifungal vaginal creams and/or suppositories can be bought at most drug stores without a prescription. Creams and suppositories such as Monistat, Canesten or Gynecure come in 1, 3 or 7 day treatments. There are also pills that can be taken. If the symptoms do not go away after you finish the treatment, see a doctor for an assessment.

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 during treatment and for 3 days after use.

Prevention

Certain lifestyle habits can increase the chance of getting a yeast infection. Some activities to decrease the risk include:

- using a condom for sex (semen can help yeast to grow)
- bathing with water only, avoiding soap in the genital area
- keeping your genitals clean and dry
- avoiding douching so all the good germs are not washed away
- avoiding scented tampons, pads, feminine sprays and wipes
- never putting anything in or near the vagina that has been in the anus
- gently pulling back on the foreskin, washing with warm water and drying carefully
- retracting the foreskin when urinating to keep urine from getting trapped
- wearing loose fitting clothes and cotton underwear to allow air in. Do not wear underwear to bed.
- changing out of wet exercise clothing or bathing suits as soon as possible. Yeast likes to grow in moist dark areas.
- eating a healthy diet and decreasing stress

For further information, talk to your health care professional or call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 or visit peelsexualhealth.ca peelregion.ca/health