

# Yeast Infection



*We respect your right to responsible sexuality!*

Vaginal yeast infections are caused by *Candida albicans*, a type of yeast that is normally found inside the vagina. Sometimes yeast multiplies rapidly causing a “yeast infection.” Doctors may call a yeast infection “Candidiasis,” after the name of the organism that causes it.

## **Signs & Symptoms:**

Things to look for to determine if you have a yeast infection:

*Feels like:* itching and burning in the vagina and vulva (the name for the “outside” parts of the female genitals - everything you would see if you look at yourself “down there” with a mirror). While itching isn’t always present, it can be severe!

*Looks like:* clumpy or thick and creamy, whitish discharge from your vagina.

*Smells like:* bread or beer.

## **Treatment:**

There are a variety of options available for treating yeast infections.

• **Diflucan:** Your doctor can prescribe a pill called Diflucan to treat your yeast infection. Because it is taken by mouth, it works on your whole body. Some people prefer to treat an infection at its source, where the problem is. It can also be expensive if you don’t have insurance. You may wish to consider the following options.

• **Creams & Suppositories:** There are a variety of creams and suppositories that treat yeast infections. **Butocanozole, clotrimazole, miconazole** and **nystatin** are the names of a few. The differences between these are what form they come in (cream or suppository) and how many days you need to take them (from 3-7 days). These are found in any drug store and you do not need a prescription. Read the directions on the different products to choose which is best for you. The cost can range from about \$10 - \$16.

\*Note on self-treatment: If you use a yeast medication and the infection does not clear up, see your doctor or clinic for more testing. You could have a more serious infection that requires a different medication. Listen to your body! If you have a sore, rash, bump or discharge that is new, get tested right away!

## **Causes:**

There are many things that contribute to a yeast infection.

• **Antibiotics** are a leading cause of yeast infections in women. They kill the “healthy bacteria” in your vagina, upsetting the balance of your normal vaginal environment and causing too much yeast to grow.

• **Clothing:** Tight restrictive underclothes that do not “breathe” (such as non-cotton panties and nylons) can increase the chances a yeast infection. If trying to get rid of a

## Yeast Infection – page 2

---

yeast infection, consider wearing no underwear with loose fitting clothing during the day & none while you sleep. Unbleached, undyed cotton underwear is the best choice.

- **Chemicals:** Inks, dyes and perfumes can upset the balance in your vagina and/or trigger allergic reactions that lead to yeast infections. These may be found in your clothing, toilet paper, douches, deodorant sprays and powders, laundry detergents and soap. Don't use soap to wash your vagina and vulva –water is all you need.
- **Condoms** can cause yeast infections if you have an allergy to latex. You may also get a yeast infection if you are using a condom that is lubricated with nonoxynol-9, a spermicide that is very irritating to the lining of the vagina. You can use non-latex condoms and lubricants without nonoxynol-9.
- **Diet** choices can increase the development of yeast infections. If you have frequent yeast infections or are trying to get rid of a current infection, consider eliminating or decreasing your intake of simple sugars like those found in candy, pop, juice, alcohol and fermented products like cheese, wine and vinegar. Diabetics also have trouble with frequent yeast infections because the high level of sugar in the blood stream can act as food to yeast.
- **Hormones**, whether naturally in the body or put into the body by a pill, patch, or other form, can affect yeast growth. Pregnant women are prone to yeast infections because of hormonal changes during pregnancy. Some women who use hormonal birth control options like “the pill” or “the patch” or “the ring” may also be more likely to get to yeast infections. Steroids used in the treatment of disorders like arthritis, asthma or lupus can increase chances of getting yeast infections.
- **Injury** to the vulva or vagina through vaginal sex or stimulation, “touching”, can lead to a yeast infection. Using a good quality water-based lubricant during sex can help decrease injury to genital area. Hand creams, Vaseline, baby oil or vegetable oils should not be used because they can break down condoms and may have scents, dyes or perfumes that are irritating to the vagina. Spit or saliva can cause yeast infections in some people too.
- **Sex:** Yeast infections can be passed between sexual partners. If a woman gets yeast infections often, her partner may also need medicine for yeast. Females can transmit a yeast infection to another female partner and should be careful when touching their own vulva and then a partner's. Keep toys used during sex clean!
- **Weak immune system:** A person with a weakened immune system is more likely to get yeast infections. In addition to vaginal yeast, a person may have trouble with “thrush,” a yeast infection of the throat and mouth or esophagus, tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach.

Kent County Health Department ♦ Personal Health Services ♦ 700 Fuller Ave NE ♦ Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
616/632-7171 ♦ [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health)

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for talking with a health care provider. If you have any questions about yeast infections or think you may have one, call your health care provider.*