



VAGINAL YEAST

Definition - Yeast is a fungus that is found in the vagina and the rectum. Usually the vaginal environment is maintained by the presence of "friendly" bacteria that keep the system in balance. Sometimes certain conditions can cause a disruption in the vaginal environment that promotes the ability of yeast to flourish. When this happens, you have a yeast infection. It is not an infection that is caused by sexual transmission, but rather a disruption in the woman's normal vaginal environment.

What Are Some Reasons For Yeast Infections?

Some of the things we know that change the balance of the vagina and make it more prone to yeast infections are:

- *Stress
- *Pregnancy
- *Antibiotics
- *Diabetes
- *Birth Control Pills
- *Too much sugar and carbohydrates in the diet
- *Normal changes during menstruation

Other predisposing factors are endocrine imbalances, STD's, PMS, tight restricting clothing, use of commercial douches, perfumed products may alter the PH of the vagina or damage the epithelial cells of the vagina. It is thought that a lack of vitamins and minerals such as zinc, magnesium, and vitamin B6 are linked to recurrent yeast infections.

Signs And Symptoms

- *Vaginal itching
- *Painful urination
- *Thick white discharge
- *Edema and redness to the vaginal area
- *Painful intercourse

How Is Yeast Diagnosed?

Yeast is diagnosed by a report of your symptoms as well as by looking at the vaginal secretions under the microscope to determine the presence of yeast organisms and by physical exam.

Treatment

There are many types of yeast preparations available over the counter and by prescription. It is important that your health care provider makes the initial diagnosis of yeast as there are other reasons for vaginal irritations. Over the counter preparations include: Gynelotrimin, Mycelex, Monistat and generic brands are also available. Prescription preparations include: Terazol, Femstat and an oral form, Diflucan.

Patient Teaching

After the diagnosis of yeast has been made and a vaginal or oral medicine has been prescribed, it is important to not only use the medication but to also consider other lifestyle issues that may optimize your recovery. These include:

- *Keeping the vaginal area clean and dry
- *Abstaining from intercourse during the treatment period
- *Avoid mineral oil or vasoline as lubricants as they weaken latex products
- *Natural lubricants or water based ones like KY, Astroglide, or Replens
- *To help the itching, take a bath with Aveeno (oatmeal product)
- *An over the counter hydrocortisone cream such as Cortaid for itching

- *Benadryl as directed to relieve the itching
- *Avoid high yeast foods such as wine and cheese
- *Decrease your intake of sugar
- *Exercise and eat healthy to improve your immunity

Other considerations include wearing cotton underwear, not synthetics; washing with plain water not perfumed soaps; wash underwear in natural soaps and rinse with a 1/4-1/2 cup of white vinegar to help pull any soap residue out. Wipe from front to back after using the restroom, use pads at night when menstruating to allow area to breathe, wearing no underwear at night also allows the vaginal area to breathe.

Natural Products Used To Treat Yeast Infections

- *Caprylic Acid (antifungal)
- *Garlic (antifungal properties)
- *Acidophilus (replenishes good bacteria) found in yogurt and available in capsules
- *Taheebo Tea (a hardwood tree that has antifungal properties)
- *Primrose Oil (replenishes essential fatty acids necessary to promote healthy skin)
- *Control (vitamin B&C, selenium, beet carotene, acidophilus, zinc, taheebo, linseed)
- *Yeast fighters (acidophilus, garlic, caprylic acid, biotin, and fiber)