



YEAST: GENERAL AND DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Lemon juice and herbal teas are also good.
- Wear cotton underwear or none at all. Synthetic fibers trap moisture in the crotch area and provide an excellent breeding medium for many organisms. You may even need to change cotton underwear by mid-afternoon if it gets damp from discharge or sweat.
- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing; try not to wear pantyhose, especially those without a cotton panel in the crotch.
- Avoid all concentrated sugars, including honey, maple syrup, and corn syrup.
- Avoid caffeine, including coffee, caffeinated sodas, chocolate, and black tea.
- Don't use bubble bath, bath oils, bath salts, or strongly perfumed soaps in your bath or around your vulva.
- Use white, unscented toilet paper.
- Don't use any "feminine hygiene" or douche products.
- Practice excellent personal hygiene: Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement. Rinse your vaginal area with water (no soap) during the day, then pat dry, to reduce the likelihood of bacterial or fungal growth.
- Bacteria spread readily in heat and moisture. Dry yourself gently but thoroughly after bathing or swimming. Change out of wet swim clothes soon after swimming. Change undergarments and laundry (with a mild detergent) frequently. Use 1 cup of white vinegar in the rinse cycle of your washer to remove soap residue, acidify garments, and disinfect and remove any remaining body fluids.
- Don't scratch your crotch. Scratching will further irritate the area and spread the infection.
- Avoid intercourse during the worst symptoms or if painful. Your partner may also need to be treated to prevent re-infecting you. Men can harbor asymptomatic infections that you then pass back and forth, and your attempts at eliminating the infection will be ineffectual.
- Use some form of natural lubrication during intercourse, such as almond or coconut oil. Urinate after sex and thoroughly rinse yourself off with warm water.
- Take 500 to 1,000 mg of vitamin C complex (with bioflavonoids) daily as a preventative or when infections occur.
- Eat plenty of live-culture plain yogurt each day to both prevent and treat vaginal infections. This is especially good when you are under stress or when you must take antibiotics. (Let your doctor know if you are prone to yeast infections before you take antibiotics.)

- Cut back on simple carbohydrates (starches and sugars, including processed flour and fruits and fruit juices).
- Eat nutritious meals that emphasize whole grains, vegetables, and high-quality protein foods. Reduce the amount of sweets in your diet while you are treating vaginal infections. Eliminate sweets altogether if you are prone to such infections. This includes reducing the amount of fruit you eat (get your vitamins and minerals from extra vegetables) and using rice, oats, millet, and other whole grains in place of yeasted breads whenever possible. These dietary changes alone can often clear up a yeast infection.
- Reduce stress in your life as much as possible. Get adequate rest. Infections thrive when your body is run down.

-Yeast Infections

Candida Albicans is the fungal organism that causes what is commonly known as a yeast infection. All women have this organism in their bodies, but various circumstances, such as the increased vaginal discharge that accompanies pregnancy (especially if you wear clothes that prevent adequate aeration of your vulva), changes in vaginal pH, increased consumption of carbohydrates, and stress and fatigue, can lead to the overgrowth of yeast. Symptoms of a yeast infection are itching and redness of the genitals; white, thick, yeasty-smelling discharge that may look curdy like cottage cheese (but might be slight); burning of the vulva; and painful intercourse. There may be frequent urination or even an attendant bladder infection caused by irritation of the urethra. Symptoms range from mild to severe, with itching and burning being the most noticeable.

If you have no history of yeast infection, the problem will likely clear up with no treatment at all as soon as the baby is born and can simply be kept under control with simple dietary and herbal treatments. If you have a history of yeast infections, continue treatment after birth if they persist. Occasionally, a woman who has a yeast infection may pass it on to the baby during birth. The baby may then develop oral thrush, which can cause digestive distress, and in turn pass it on to the mother's nipples, causing her mild to extreme discomfort and difficulty with breastfeeding. Therefore, you should at least try to minimize all yeast infections with natural remedies before the birth. For treatment of thrush in babies and on the breasts, refer to my book, *Natural Healing for Babies and Children*, listed in "Further Reading."

Treatment of a yeast infection includes close adherence to all the general and dietary guidelines on page 199, as well as the following internal remedies and your choice of external applications.

INTERNAL REMEDIES

- Chickweed, burdock root, dandelion root, and echinacea are among my favorite herbs for cooling and soothing all manner of damp, inflammatory conditions. They are perfectly safe for use during pregnancy. They may be used singly or in combination, as infusions or tinctures, short or long term. To prepare an infusion, place 1 ounce of any of these herbs, or a mix of equal parts into a quart-size jar. Fill the jar with boiling water, cover, and steep for two hours. Drink 2 cups daily as needed. Or, if you prefer, take a total of 20 to 40 drops of any single tincture or combination two to three times daily depending upon the infection's severity.
- Drink 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in water once or twice a day. It can help prevent and reduce yeast infections while adding extra B vitamins to your diet. Cranberries and cranberry juice also acidify the urine, preventing bladder infections, which often occur in the presence of vaginal yeast infections.

- If your yeast infection seems related to your use of antibiotics, or if you also have gas regularly, your intestinal flora may have been overly reduced by the use of antibiotics, which can allow yeast to overgrow in your system. Eat 1/2 cup of live-culture yogurt daily to help restore your intestinal flora. Seaweeds such as kelp and dulse may also improve intestinal flora, and kelp is reputed to be excellent for reducing inflammation.

EXTERNAL REMEDIES

Choose a few of these suggestions to see what works best for you. Note that all of these remedies are for external use only.

- Live-culture, plain, unsweetened yogurt is perhaps one of the most effective remedies for treating yeast infections. Applied directly to the vulva it reduces inflammation, restores your pH balance, and also restores your normal vaginal flora while destroying the yeast. The best method I know for applying the yogurt is as follows:
 1. An hour before you are ready to apply the yogurt, put about 4 tablespoons of it in a dish and let it come to room temperature. This is merely a comfort measure, but it is well worth it-very cold yogurt applied to your bottom will certainly cause you to catch your breath! Use a separate dish so you don't inadvertently contaminate the entire yogurt container.
 2. Insert your index finger into your vagina and gently scoop out all the yeast you can (this is best done in the shower). Yeast likes to thrive on the vaginal walls and in the area up around the cervix. Do not attempt to scrape it out; merely get out what you can so that the lactobacillus and acidophilus cultures in the yogurt stand a better chance of overcoming the yeast
 3. Wash your hands thoroughly; then put 1 to 2 tablespoons of the yogurt onto your index and middle fingers. Smear this up inside your vagina.
 4. Now apply the remaining yogurt to your vulva, the external genitals, getting it well into the creases.
 5. Repeat this twice a day during an acute yeast infection, a couple of times a week if you are prone to yeast outbreaks.

Apple cider vinegar makes a great rinse for the vulva and works like yogurt. Mix 1/4 cup vinegar in 3/4 cup of warm water and apply as you did the yogurt. Vinegar can sting considerably, especially if your flesh is raw or if you have been scratching, so it is best applied in a orb of warm water.

One traditional remedy for yeast infections is to peel a clove of garlic very carefully so as not to nick it at all. Dip the clove in olive oil and insert vaginally. Repeat with a fresh clove each night for several days in a row. It may occasionally cause burning, but garlic is highly regarded for its antifungal properties. This treatment is not always effective.

Black walnut bark can be made into an infusion that can be used as an antifungal rinse for your vulva (not a douche). To make the infusion, mix 1 ounce per 4 cups of water; boil for twenty minutes, and then strain. Rinse once a day during an active yeast infection. Use with care as it may stain clothing.

Acidophilus, a live culture, can be used in capsules as a nightly suppository or in liquid form as a wash. You can also smear the liquid up inside of yourself as you did with yogurt. Acidophilus can acidify an overly alkaline vaginal environment and decrease the yeast population, although some women find that acidophilus aggravates the irritation, possibly because the vaginal environment is already overly acidic. In

this case a baking soda rinse-2 tablespoons per cup of warm water -can be applied to your vulva and smeared inside of the birth canal.

Slippery elm bark powder, marshmallow root powder, and comfrey root powder soothe irritated and inflamed tissue. Sprinkle the powder on your irritated vulva or rinse yourself with a tea of any of these (or a mixture of them), getting some up inside of yourself with your fingers. To prepare a tea, mix 1 tablespoon of herbal powder with 1-cup hot water, stirring well. You can also prepare an infusion with the whole dried herbs by boiling 4 to 6 tablespoons of the herbs in 4 cups of water for twenty minutes.

The juice of the aloe vera plant is exceptionally cooling and soothing and mildly antiseptic as well. It can be scraped from the inside of fresh leaves or purchased at natural foods stores in the form of aloe vera gel and applied. In the case of an extremely irritated vulva, you can spread some of the gel onto a cloth menstrual pad and wear it throughout the day.

A poultice or tea of fresh chickweed is a marvelous healing and anti-inflammatory application for a yeast infection. Chickweed is readily available as a wild herb, easy to recognize, and safe to use. It's one of my favorite healing herbs. Refer to a field guide for identification of this plant.

Healing Salve can be applied to your sore vulva as a comforting ointment. To prepare, refer to "Herbal Preparations." in Appendix I. Include chickweed, plantain, and calendula in your salve.

Yeast-Gard is a prepackaged homeopathic suppository that many pregnant women find highly effective for the treatment of persistent, difficult yeast infections. It is available at many regular drugstores and even at some supermarkets. Health food stores also carry it.

You can also create your own boluses (suppositories) for persistent yeast infections. While it takes a little effort, they are well worth it and you can make a large supply at a time that keeps indefinitely in the refrigerator if well wrapped. Boluses are effective for soothing inflamed vaginal membranes and are mildly antifungal. Because it is safer not to douche during pregnancy, an herbal bolus is an excellent way to apply herbs up in the vagina. By varying the herbs, you can use boluses after birth to heal hemorrhoids.

To prepare a supply, you will need 1/2 cup of either coconut oil or cocoa butter or a combination of both (these oils become hard when cold, holding their shape, but then soften when warmed), and approximately 3/4 cup of powdered herbs. A good combination would be equal parts of goldenseal powder, echinacea powder, and burdock root powder and 1/2 cup of slippery elm powder. Melt the oil in a small pot over low heat, but do not boil. When the oil is melted, turn off the stove. Add the herbal powders and stir thoroughly until the mixture forms a thick, sticky dough. Now put some slippery elm powder onto a cutting board and place your "dough" on it. Roll the dough into the shape of a long, thin log (like the clay "snakes" you made in kindergarten) about as thick as your index finger. Cut the roll into pieces about 1½ to 2 inches in length, wrap in foil, and put into the refrigerator. They will be ready to use in a couple of hours.

To use, place one bolus up into your vagina each night before bed. The bolus will melt and can be a bit messy, so wear underwear with a pad or sleep on a towel. Repeat for a week.