



# Yeast Infections

## What Is a Yeast Infection?

A vaginal yeast infection is an irritation of the vagina and the area around the vagina (vulva) caused by the fungus *Candida albicans*. Vaginas have a naturally occurring mix of yeast (including candida) and bacteria living inside. A yeast infection occurs when the amount of candida in the vagina grows out of balance, or when the candida penetrates into deeper vaginal cell layers.

This imbalance may be caused by a number of things including stress, diet, antibiotics, birth control pills, pregnancy, diabetes, and higher-than-average amounts of vaginal moisture. Yeast infections can also be found on the penis and in the mouth/throat, most commonly passed on through sexual intercourse or oral sex.

## What Are the Signs of a Yeast Infection?

- Itching, burning, redness, swelling in and around the vagina (or penis, etc.)
- Thick, white discharge from the vagina that looks similar to cottage cheese, which does not have a bad smell
  - Watery vaginal discharge
  - Pain or discomfort during vaginal sex
  - Pain when urinating

You may only have a few of these symptoms and they can be mild or severe. If you have any unusual symptoms in the genital area, please see a doctor immediately. These symptoms may be indicators of other infections.

## How Will a Doctor Know that I Have a Yeast Infection?

Usually, your doctor can tell whether you have a yeast infection by looking at your discharge, or during a pap exam. Your doctor may take a sample to send to the lab for testing. If you have not had a yeast infection before, or are having discharge that is unusual, it is best to see your doctor to determine if a yeast infection is causing the symptoms. Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) may have symptoms that are similar to a yeast infection, but the treatments are different.

## **How Are Yeast Infections Treated?**

Yeast infections can be treated with prescription medication (*Diflucan*) or over-the-counter antifungal medicines, including suppositories or capsules of cream that are inserted into the vagina. You can also purchase a cream that can be applied to the outside of the vagina (or penis) to help with swelling and itching. These creams may not always cure the infection, but they can relieve some of the discomfort.

## **What Is the Difference Between 1-Day, 3-Day, and 7-Day Over-the-Counter Treatments?**

The difference between treatments is the concentration of medication. All treatments contain the same amount of medication to cure the yeast infection. In the 1-day treatment, the medication is contained in one application. In 7-day treatments this medication is spread over 7 applications. If you have sensitive skin, you may want to try a longer treatment as they tend to be less irritating.

## **How Long Will It Take for the Symptoms to Disappear?**

Once you begin treatment, you should start to experience improvements in about 2-3 days. External creams that are put on the inner and outer lips of the vagina or on the penis should relieve itching and swelling shortly after the cream is applied. No matter what type of treatment you choose, be sure to follow package instructions and your doctor's advice.

## **Is a Yeast Infection a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)?**

A yeast infection is not classified as an STI because it is an infection that develops naturally in the body of those who have a vagina. Therefore, these individuals do not have to be sexually active to get a yeast infection. However, the infection can be passed to their sexual partners.

## **How Will I Know If I Passed a Yeast Infection to my Partner?**

Individuals with a penis who develop a yeast infection from sexual contact will often experience a rash and itchiness on the penis and around the scrotum. This rash can easily be treated using an antifungal cream, which can be purchased in a pharmacy. To avoid passing a yeast infection, try to avoid having sex until the infection has cleared. If you choose to have sex, use condoms to help prevent the infection from spreading.

## **Can a Yeast Infection Be Passed from One Vagina to Another?**

A yeast infection can be passed from one vagina to another through sexual contact. To prevent the passing of a yeast infection, try to abstain from sex until the infection has cleared. If this is not possible, condoms should be used on sex toys, and having sex by rubbing vaginas together should be avoided until the infection is gone.

If you would like further information on STIs, testing and/or safer sex practices, please feel free to drop by our Centre or contact us by phone or email. If you want to see a doctor for confidential STI testing, please call us to make an appointment.

## **Sexual Health Questions? We have Answers!**

### **Location:**

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

### **Hours:**

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm

Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Wednesday: 9am – 4:30pm

Thursday: 12pm – 6:00pm

Friday: 9am – 4:30pm

### **Phone:**

579-1009

Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

### **Website:**

[www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com](http://www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com)

### **Email:**

[pp.nlshc@gmail.com](mailto:pp.nlshc@gmail.com)

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