

YEAST INFECTIONS

What is a yeast infection?

Monilia or yeast is caused by a fungus that is normally present in small amounts in the vagina of women. Antibiotics, birth control pills, diabetes, eating too much sugar, pregnancy or stress can disturb the healthy balance in the vagina causing the yeast to overgrow. It grows best in warm, moist places, so the vagina is ideal.

How do I know if I have a yeast infection?

If you have an infection, your vagina might be itchy, sore and swollen and you might have a thick, white discharge. A yeast infection is not dangerous but you should get it treated so it won't bother you anymore and so that it won't get passed on to the baby. It is not a serious problem if a baby has it, but can cause quite a lot of difficulty with breastfeeding. It is easier to clear it up in you than treat both you **and** the baby. Immediate diagnosis is made by examining the discharge (fluid) under a microscope and/or by a culture (swab) grown in a laboratory.

Can it hurt my partner?

Because you can pass it back and forth between each other, your partner should use a condom until your vagina is not itchy or sore. Symptoms of a yeast infection in men include itching and swelling on the end of their penis. Treatment is with a prescription (see below).

TREATMENT

You may choose a home remedy or a prescription treatment depending upon your previous history of vaginal infection, your successes and failures with different treatments, severity of your symptoms, money, time, concern for side effects or personal choice.

Prescriptions

If you are close to your due date you will want to clear up any infections as soon as possible as yeast can be passed on to the baby. Anti-fungal vaginal tablets or creams (e.g. Monistat) can be purchased over the counter for about \$15.00 and usually clears up a fungal infection in one use. Insert one tablet or application of cream into the vagina as instructed, usually at night. Wear a panty liner. The dual packs provide a cream that can be applied to the external genitals if you are sore there. If not, have your partner apply to his genitals. Wash your genital area regularly and avoid irritating sprays, perfumed soaps, bath oils and salts.

Home treatment

- Boric acid is a mild antiseptic available in powder form on the home remedies shelf of your pharmacy. In solution, it is used as eyewash, so you can be assured that it is gentle. The "Boric Acid Cure" has worked extremely well for many women and has been in use for several years. It is also economical. You will need:

- Boric acid powder
- Empty gelatin capsules, size 00

The capsules can be purchased at health food stores. Fill 5 capsules with the powder. Tapping some powder into the lid and bringing the two halves of the capsule together works well. The capsules are used like vaginal suppositories, inserted one per night high in the vagina. Repeat for five nights. Do the whole treatment even if your symptoms disappear before the five days are through. Wear a pantyliner in the mornings, as there will be some discharge. If you have found Monistat, etc., painful in attempting to treat yeast, you'll probably love Boric acid.

- Some women have had success with using Lactobacillus acidophilus capsules or Bifidus (from health food stores). Lactobacillus is the same bacteria that is in yogurt. Put 1 capsule in your

vagina each night before bed. Do this for 5-7 nights. The lactobacillus will make it harder for the yeast to grow. We strongly recommend the use of 2-4 (or more) capsules orally for as long as needed.

- Try drinking a glass of unsweetened Cranberry juice once a day. If the infection is particularly strong, cut out juices altogether.
- Cut out junk foods and refined sugars. Cut back on dairy products. Alcohol contains a lot of sugar, especially beer.
- Yogurt applied externally to the genitals can relieve the itching. You can also use apple cider vinegar diluted with water. You can also swish your fingers in the vinegar/water mixture and insert vaginally to help restore the acid-base balance.

Things you can do to help prevent a yeast infection:

- Wear cotton underwear and pantyhose with a cotton crotch
- Don't wear underwear at night
- Wipe with toilet paper from front to back and don't use perfumed toilet paper
- Don't wear tight jeans
- Don't use pads or tampons with deodorant in them
- Don't use feminine hygiene sprays
- Don't use soap with perfume or bubble baths
- Don't use douches in pregnancy
- Don't have sex if it hurts, wait until you are not sore

You are more likely to get a yeast infection if:

- You are eating a diet high in sugar, whether natural (fruit) or processed
- You are taking antibiotics or birth control pills
- You are pregnant (due to higher levels of blood glucose in pregnancy)
- You have diabetes
- You are under a lot of stress (reduce stress and increase B vitamins)

What if my baby has a yeast infection?

Normally, yeast in a baby shows up as thrush (roof of the mouth is coated white) or as a diaper rash that won't go away.

Oral thrush in the baby; use a cotton swab and paint the inside of the baby's mouth with:

- A) Straight lemon juice, or
- B) 1 tsp. Of baking soda dissolved in 1 cup of water after each nursing.

Discontinue once all the white patches have gone.

If the baby is breastfeeding, wash your hands after touching yeast areas to avoid spreading it. Wipe your nipples in a vinegar or baking soda rinse (see below for dilutions) after feedings to avoid the yeast being transferred to you. Yeast on your nipples can cause a severe pain if untreated.

Yeast-related diaper rashes show as peeling skin with bright red patches underneath. Sit the baby in a bath of:

- A) Dilute white vinegar (2 Tbsp to 1 quart of water), or
- B) Baking soda (2 Tbsp to 1 quart water)

several times daily for 15 minutes a time. Keep the area as clean and dry as possible. Monistat cream can also be effective.

Ask your midwife about treating both yourself and your bay with Gentian Violet

Other:

Read [The Yeast Connection](#) by William Crook.