



VAGINAL YEAST INFECTIONS

What causes a vaginal yeast infection?

Vaginal infections may be caused by a yeast, which is a type of fungus. Small numbers of these tiny organisms normally live on the skin and inside the vagina. An infection can occur when there is an overgrowth of yeast in the vaginal environment.

The following factors may cause conditions that favor the overgrowth of yeast:

- Menstruation.
- Pregnancy.
- Some medicines (antibiotics, steroids, oral contraceptives).
- Diabetes.
- Constant moisture and irritation of the vagina.

What are the symptoms of a vaginal yeast infection?

Yeast infections can be very uncomfortable. The following symptoms may occur:

- Itching and burning in the vagina.
- Itching and burning of the skin area around the vagina.
- Swelling and redness of the skin area around the vagina.
- A thick, white vaginal discharge that looks like cottage cheese.
- Pain during sexual intercourse.

How common are vaginal yeast infections?

Three-fourths of all women have a yeast infection at some time in their lives. One-half of these women have the infection more than once.

What should I do about my symptoms?

If you have symptoms of a yeast infection, your doctor will probably want to talk with you about your symptoms. Your doctor may want to examine you to make sure that your symptoms are caused by a yeast infection.

How is a vaginal yeast infection treated?

Yeast infections can be treated with medicine that you place in your vagina. The medicine you place in your vagina may be a cream, a special type of tablet or a suppository. A cream can also be applied to the area around the vagina to relieve itching.

You also can be treated with a pill that you take by mouth only one time. Talk to your doctor about the best medicine for you. Remember to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, since this may affect the medicine you use.

Should I see my doctor every time I have a yeast infection?

Be sure to see your doctor the first time you have symptoms of a yeast infection. It is very important to make sure you really have a yeast infection before you start taking medicine for it. The symptoms of a yeast infection can also be the symptoms of other infections. Treating yourself for a yeast infection when you really have another infection may make the problem worse. Ask your doctor if you can treat yourself with an over-the-counter cream for yeast infections if you get another infection.

How can I avoid getting another infection?

You can try the following things to avoid getting another yeast infection:

- Don't wear tight-fitting or synthetic-fiber clothes.
- Wear Cotton underwear, not nylon.
- Don't wear pantyhose or tights every day.
- Use your blow dryer on a low setting to dry your genital area after you shower or bathe, and before you get dressed.
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet. This may keep the organisms that normally live in your rectum from getting into your vagina.
- Change out of a wet swimsuit or damp clothes as soon as possible.
- Don't douche or use feminine hygiene sprays, deodorant or scented sanitary pads or tampons, or bubble bath.
- Don't use colored or perfumed toilet paper.