



# Yeast Infection

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## What is a yeast infection?

A yeast infection is caused by an overgrowth of naturally occurring yeast organisms in the genital area. Women usually get yeast infections in the vaginal area. Men can get a yeast infection on the penis.

## What causes a yeast infection?

Yeast infections are not usually sexually transmitted. Although many women get a yeast infection without any noticeable cause, it can be triggered by anything that changes the natural balance of micro-organisms in the vagina, such as taking antibiotic medication. People with certain diseases, including diabetes and HIV infection, are especially vulnerable to yeast infections.

## What are the symptoms of a yeast infection?

Symptoms may include itching, soreness, or a burning sensation in the vagina, and a thick, cottage-cheese-like discharge. In men, itching and rash at the head of the penis is the most common symptom.

## How will I know if I have a yeast infection?

For women, your doctor or other health-care provider will collect a sample of fluid with a small swab from the vagina and have it tested at a laboratory. For men, a yeast infection can usually be diagnosed by a simple visual exam.

## How is a yeast infection treated?

Medicated creams, vaginal suppositories, or pills taken by mouth can be used to cure a yeast infection. Many of these treatments are available without a prescription at drugstores. You should see a doctor if your yeast infection won't go away after you've taken a full course of medication, or if it keeps returning, as there may be other causes of your symptoms.

## What happens if a yeast infection is left untreated?

Discomfort and inconvenience are the worst problems associated with a yeast infection.

## Do sex partners have to be treated?

In general, sex partners do not need to be treated unless they have symptoms.

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## Yeast Infection, *Continued*

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### What if I'm pregnant?

We don't know of any serious effects – on the mother or the baby – of a yeast infection during pregnancy, but you should tell your doctor that you're pregnant when you seek treatment for a yeast infection.

A yeast infection is not usually sexually transmitted. However, all pregnant women should be tested for diseases that ARE sexually transmitted (STDs), including HIV, as early as possible in pregnancy. You should be tested again during your pregnancy if you or your partner engage in activities that increase your risk of getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD). For example, you are at higher risk for STDs if you have a new sex partner during pregnancy, or if you have more than one partner. If left untreated, STDs can be devastating for your baby. To protect yourself and your baby against HIV and other STDs, use a latex condom whenever you have sex.

### How can I avoid a yeast infection?

Avoiding unnecessary antibiotic medication may help reduce the risk of a yeast infection.

A yeast infection is generally not sexually transmitted. You can reduce your risk of getting most other infections that ARE sexually transmitted, including HIV, by having sex only in a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner you are sure is not infected. If you are having sex outside of such a relationship, you can reduce your risk of STDs by:

- 1) *Always using a latex condom (or other type of latex barrier) whenever you have sex – vaginal, anal, or oral.* Condoms made of “natural” materials, such as lambskin, protect against pregnancy, but not against STDs. If you are allergic to latex, you can use condoms made of polyurethane or other synthetic materials.
- 2) *Limiting the number of people you have sex with.*  
The more partners you have, the higher your risk.
- 3) *Avoiding alcohol and drugs when you have sex.* Drinking or getting high makes it much harder to remember to use condoms to protect yourself and others. For free, confidential help with a substance abuse problem, call 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638), or just call 311.

### More information

Free, confidential STD exams and treatment, and confidential or anonymous HIV counseling and testing, are available at Health Department clinics in all 5 boroughs of New York City. Health insurance, proof of citizenship, and parental consent are NOT required. For a list of clinics and hours, visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health), or call 311.

