

# yeast infections

## What is a yeast infection?

- Yeast is a fungus that normally lives in small amounts in the vagina\*, penis\* and mouth. If too much yeast grows, it can lead to a yeast infection in those areas.
- Yeast infections are very common. They can be uncomfortable, but they are not harmful to your health.

## How do you get a yeast infection?

- Although yeast infections are common in people who have sex, a yeast infection is not a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Factors that can cause yeast to overgrow include:
  - o douching;
  - o taking antibiotics or other medications;
  - o hormonal changes (such as pregnancy, changes in your fertility cycle);
  - o menstruation (your period);
  - o using hormonal birth control methods such as the pill, patch or ring;
  - o using diaphragms, sponges or spermicides;
  - o and/or having a weakened immune system.

## How do you know if you have a yeast infection?

- Symptoms can vary depending on where the yeast infection is.
- Many people do not have any symptoms.

## Vagina:

- Discharge from your vagina that is thick and white.
- Itching, swelling, or red colour inside and outside your vagina.

*\*We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (eg. trans folks), and support you using the language that feels best for you.*

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- Pain when you have sex.
- Burning when you urinate (pee).

### **Penis:**

- Itching, rash, swelling, or red colour on the tip of your penis.
- Pain when you have sex.
- Burning when you urinate (pee).

### **Mouth:**

- White coating on the tongue.
- Inflammation in the mouth.

How can you get tested for a yeast infection?

- A clinician can test you by examining your vagina, penis or mouth.
- Because the symptoms of yeast infections can be similar to other infections, it is important to get tested to ensure you get the correct treatment for the infection you have.

### **What if you test positive for a yeast infection?**

- If you are not sure if you have a yeast infection or this is your first one, see your clinician.
- Yeast in your vagina, penis or mouth is not harmful and will usually go away on its own. You only need to treat a yeast infection if the symptoms are bothering you.
- You can buy antifungal cream or vaginal suppositories (capsules that get inserted into the vagina) to treat a yeast infection from a pharmacy. You do not need a prescription to buy them.
- There is also a one dose oral pill which you can take to clear up the infection. You do not need a prescription to buy this pill.
- If you feel better, you don't need another test.
- If you have done one round of treatment and your symptoms have not gone away, see your clinician.

How can you lower your risk of getting yeast infections?

- Do not use pads, tampons, or bath products that are perfumed or coloured.
- Wear unbleached, cotton underwear during the day. It's better not to wear underwear when you sleep.
- Avoid tight fitting pants, tights or nylons.
- Do not douche or use feminine hygiene sprays, wipes or soaps. Your vagina cleans itself.
- Change out of your wet bathing suit or sweaty exercise clothes as soon as possible.
- Avoid lubricants that are made from glycerin. Glycerin may contribute to yeast overgrowth.

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- Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and healthy foods. This will help keep your immune system strong to prevent yeast infections.
- Using probiotics (good bacteria) either orally or vaginally may help prevent yeast infections. Probiotics can also be helpful when you are taking antibiotics. Talk to your clinician or visit a health food store for more information.
- Yeast infections are not usually sexually transmitted. However, if you keep getting yeast infections, encourage your partner(s) to see their clinician for possible treatment.

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