

Vaginal yeast infection

What is a vaginal yeast infection?

A vaginal yeast infection is a common infection caused by the overgrowth of yeast in the vagina.

What causes vaginal yeast infections?

Vaginal yeast infections can be caused by many factors, some of which include:

- Current or recent use of antibiotics
- Use of corticosteroid
- Problems with your immune system
- Use of birth control pills
- Pregnancy, or
- High blood sugar from poorly controlled diabetes

How is it spread?

Vaginal yeast infections are not usually spread during sex. However, if your partner has symptoms, they should also seek treatment. Both men and women can get yeast infections.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a vaginal yeast infection may include:

- Vaginal itching
- Vaginal discharge that is often white, thick, clumpy and odourless
- Red, irritated and/or swollen skin around the opening of the vagina
- Painful sexual intercourse, or
- Pain or burning when you urinate

Men can also get yeast infections, most often as a rash under the foreskin or on the penis. The foreskin or penis may also be itchy or irritated.

Other vaginal infections, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and some scented soaps, feminine hygiene products or deodorant sprays can cause symptoms similar to a vaginal yeast infection. See your health care provider before treating yourself if:

- You are pregnant
- You are unsure if your symptoms are those of a yeast infection
- This is your first yeast infection, or
- You have repeated symptoms of yeast infections

What is the treatment?

Treatment for vaginal yeast infections include taking pills orally, using creams or ointments, or inserting tablets into the vagina. Some treatments require a prescription from your health care provider while others can be bought off the shelf at the pharmacy.

What are ways I can prevent getting a vaginal yeast infection?

Some ways to prevent getting a yeast infection include:

- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics
- Avoid douching or perfumed soaps, sprays or tampons
- Immediately change out of wet clothes, like swimsuits or workout clothes
- Avoid excessive amounts of high sugar foods and control your diabetes, and
- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing

How can I reduce my chance of getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

Practice safer sex by using a condom

When used correctly, male and female condoms help prevent the spread of many STIs during vaginal, anal and oral sex. Condoms are less effective at protecting against STIs transmitted by skin-to-skin contact, such as herpes simplex, genital warts (human papillomavirus (HPV)), and syphilis (when sores are present).

Important things to remember when using condoms:

- Check the condom package for damage. Do not use a condom that has been damaged
- Check the expiry date. Do not use a condom that is outdated
- Carefully open the package so that the condom does not tear. Do not use a condom that has been torn
- Keep condoms away from sharp objects such as rings, studs, or piercings
- Store condoms at room temperature
- A new condom should be used every time you have sex. Do not reuse condoms
- Do not use 2 condoms at once
- Use only water-based lubricants with male latex condoms. Oil-based lubricants, such as petroleum jelly, lotion, or baby oil can weaken and destroy latex
- Water or oil-based lubricant may be used with polyurethane condoms
- Use only condoms that are made of latex or polyurethane (plastic). Latex condoms and polyurethane condoms are the best types of condoms to use to help prevent pregnancy and STIs. (Animal skin condoms can help prevent pregnancy but don't work as well as latex or polyurethane condoms to prevent STIs)

Get vaccinated

Some STIs, such as hepatitis A, B and human papillomavirus (HPV) can be prevented with vaccines. Talk to your health care provider about how to get these vaccinations.

Know your sexual health status

If you have recently changed sexual partners, or have multiple sex partners, getting regularly tested for STIs will tell you if you have an infection. Some people can have an STI and not have any symptoms. Finding and treating an STI reduces the chances of passing infections on to your partner(s).

The more partners you have, the more likely you are to be exposed to STIs.

Talk about prevention

Talk to your partner(s) about STIs and how you would like to prevent them before having sex. If you are having trouble discussing safer sex with your partner(s), talk about it with your health care provider or a counselor.

For tips on how to talk to your partner(s), visit the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Smart Sex Resource <https://smartsexresource.com/sexual-health/partners-communication/talking-to-your-partners>.

Informing partners

If you have a sexually transmitted infection and are sexually active, it is important to tell your sexual partner(s). This will enable them to make decisions about their health and getting tested.

For more information

For more information on how you can reduce your chance of getting an STI, see [HealthLinkBC File #08o Preventing sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

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