

General Information

Vaginal yeast infections are caused by an organism called *Candida albicans* (a fungus). These organisms are normally present in small numbers on the skin surface, including the walls of the vagina. The normal acidic environment in the vagina keeps these organisms from multiplying but if the vagina becomes less acidic the yeast can grow to excessive numbers and cause vaginitis. Yeast infections are more likely to occur at certain times during the menstrual cycle, after taking certain medications (some antibiotics or oral contraceptives), in pregnancy, and with diabetes mellitus. Occasionally yeast infections can occur in other parts of the body besides the vagina. Yeast infections are very common. Three out of four women will have one in her lifetime.

Symptoms and Signs

- Itching and burning in the vagina and on the vulva
- White vaginal discharge that looks like cottage cheese
- Pain during sex
- Swelling of the vulva

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, make an appointment with your medical provider to determine if you have a yeast infection or another type of infection. Your practitioner can then prescribe the treatment that is right for you.

Treatment

Yeast infections are typically treated with a medicine you put in the vagina. It comes in suppositories or creams. Some of the medicines, e.g., Monistat cream, Gyne-Lotrimin cream, and other generic brands are currently sold “over-the-counter” at the Student Health Services pharmacy and at outside pharmacies.

Medicine in cream form can also be put on the vulva to relieve itching. There is also medicine in pill form that is taken by mouth. Your practitioner will recommend or prescribe the treatment that is right for you.

Although sexual transmission of a yeast infection is rare, if your partner begins to develop symptoms of a yeast infection, they should talk with their practitioner about treatment options.

Prevention

- Don't wear tight fitting clothing or synthetic materials
- Wear cotton underwear
- Dry the area thoroughly after you bathe and before getting dressed (using a blow-dryer on a low, cool setting is effective)
- Wipe from front to back after using the toilet
- Change out of wet swimsuits or workout clothes as soon as possible
- Don't douche or use hygiene sprays or deodorant pads/tampons
- Avoid perfumed or dyed toilet paper

Special Instructions:

www.familydoctor.org

Rev. 07/09