

Could You Have Yeast Overgrowth?

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What are yeasts? Yeasts are single cell fungi which belong to the vegetable kingdom. They are related to the mold family, and like molds, live all year round. The species "candida albicans" normally lives in the body primarily in your intestines and other parts of the digestive tract. This is the reason that when we take antibiotics, some people get a yeast infection. Yeasts are normally unable to cause infection in a healthy individual with an intact immune system. They only cause trouble when our defenses are weakened. That is why the severity of the disease will depend on the person and how weak their resistance is, rather than on any disease-producing properties exhibited by the fungus. Candida albicans accounts for the vast majority of diseases caused by yeast.

There are several different types and classifications of yeasts. These include brewer's yeast, baker's yeast, yeasts found in beer, ale and wine, and some are lactose fermenters like those found in fermented milk beverages. Foods high in yeast include alcoholic beverages, cheeses, dried fruits, peanuts, mushrooms, potatoes, winter squash, yams, apricots, figs, melons, raisins, and breads containing yeast or baked goods. Lactose or milk products also promote the overgrowth of candida.

Most of us are familiar with some of the common conditions associated with yeast such as: thrush, diaper rash, nail fungal infections and vaginal infections. But why do these fungi overgrow and how do they make us sick? A few families of yeast germs normally live on the mucous membranes, along with billions of friendly germs (the normal healthy gut flora). Yeast especially feels at home in the warm, dark recesses of the digestive tract and vaginal vault. Unfriendly bacteria, viruses, allergens, and other enemies also will find their way into these membrane lined passageways and cavities, including the respiratory tract. But with a strong healthy immune system they are not able to get into the deeper tissues or blood stream and cause illness. When we are given antibiotics, especially when taken repeatedly, many of the friendly germs are "wiped out". Since yeasts are not harmed by antibiotics, as they are not bacteria, they will spread out and colonize. Yeast such as candida becomes attached to the intestinal wall and the connective tissue between the cells. This creates holes through the cell membranes which then release toxic waste products back into the system. Yeasts contain decarboxylases which are enzymes that convert or putrefy amino acids into vasoactive amines. This causes alterations in the permeability of the blood vessels and other tissues, creating impermeable gut otherwise known as leaky gut syndrome. Candida albicans can produce over 400 mycotoxins which can cause systemic illness.

Gliotoxin is another mycotoxin that suppresses the immune system by decreasing the production of WBC and interfering with normal glutathione metabolism in the cell. Other things that may also weaken the immune system include nutritional deficiencies, environmental chemicals, food allergies, environmental molds, emotional stress and physical stress. When you combine several of these together you are highly susceptible to illness.

What encourages yeast growth? Many things encourage growth but the main causes are the high sugar diet, high yeast diet, diabetes, birth control pills or oral

estrogens, pregnancy, hormonal changes, low stomach acid or hypochlorhydria, menstrual cycle, impaired liver function, altered bowel flora, chemotherapy and cancer, steroids and antibiotics.

What does someone feel like with yeast overgrowth? Associated symptoms of candida overgrowth are feeling sick all over, spaced out, muscle aches, digestive problems, sugar cravings, unusually sensitive to tobacco, perfume, and other chemicals, and food sensitivities. Many patients have sought help from multiple health care physicians. Women usually experience recurrent vaginal yeast infections, PMS, recurrent urinary tract infections, sexual dysfunction, dyspareunia, vulvodynia, endometriosis, interstitial cystitis and infertility. It is most common between the ages 20 to 50.

Men usually experience fatigue, headache, digestive symptoms, muscle and joint pains, chemical sensitivities, food sensitivities, sugar cravings, memory loss, sexual dysfunction and depression.

Children usually experience constant colds, irritability, skin rashes, ear problems, sleep problems, digestive issues, hyperactivity, poor school performance, food and chemical sensitivities.

Complaints and Illnesses that May Be Yeast Related

Acne	Lupus erythematosus
Asthma	MS
Athlete's foot, Fungal infections of the skin	Muscle weakness, Incoordination
Chronic hives	Myasthenia gravis
Chronic nasal congestion, Recurrent sore throats or cough	Numbness
Crohn's disease	Pain or swelling of the joints
Eczema	Poor memory
Heartburn	Psoriasis
Indigestion, Bloating, Abdominal pain	Rheumatoid arthritis
Intestinal gas or flatulence	Scleroderma
Constipation, Diarrhea	Sinusitis
Irritability, Inability to concentrate	Tingling
Inappropriate drowsiness	Symptoms flare up on damp days or in moldy places
Jock itch	Symptoms worsen when eating yeast promoting foods or drinking beer

What do you do if you suspect candida overgrowth? The first thing you want to do is to avoid foods which promote yeast growth. The liver needs to be supported as when yeast die off they release an endotoxin. This endotoxin release often makes the patient feel like they have the flu after the start of treatment. Yeast die off may start several days after the initiation of treatment and repeat itself about three weeks later. You also need to consult your physician in order to get on an antifungal medication. Prescription medications include nystatin and theazole drugs such as diflucan. You want to avoid antibiotics if possible or at least take a good probiotic when taking an antibiotic. Avoid contact with environmental molds. Herbal remedies include caprylic acid found in coconut oil, garlic, berberine,

and essential oils such as oregano, peppermint, rosemary, thyme and tea tree oil. Boric acid may be used to treat vaginal infections naturally.

You can test for yeast in the stool with some specialty labs or if the patient has significant signs in the history or on physical exam. The physical might show fungal infections on the skin or a white coated tongue.