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# Yeast Infections

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## ASK THE DOCTOR

Answers to Your Health Questions

Dr. Weiss is a member of both the Enzymatic Therapy and Phyto-Pharmica Scientific Advisory Boards and is considered an expert in integrative cardiology. Dr. Weiss performed many hours of internship, and a cardiology residency at the Arizona Heart Institute. Dr. Weiss continues his work in cardiology becoming one of the first Naturopathic physicians to have hospital privileges in a conventional medical facility by being assigned to the Department of Medicine in 1998 as a consulting staff physician at the Arizona Heart Hospital. Dr. Weiss continues his work by maintaining his hospital privileges and by seeing patients and training interns and residents at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine. Dr. Weiss is adjunct faculty of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine.

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## Balancing Microflora is the Key

Infections caused by the overgrowth of the human yeast *Candida albicans* are very common. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 75% of all women will have at least one yeast infection during their lifetime; many women have several.<sup>1</sup> Normally, small colonies of *Candida* and other yeasts reside in and on human bodies in relative harmony and balance. However, any change, even small and expected changes, may disrupt this balance causing the colonies to grow. Imbalances in *Candida* can be caused by prescription drugs, such as antibiotics, steroids, or birth control pills, a diet high in sugar and other refined carbohydrates, steady use of alcohol, and that scourge of 21st century life – stress.

While common, yeast infections are far from simple; and depending on the location of the infection, may cause miserable symptoms, including intense itching, burning, and redness: localized swelling, white discharge, and pain. However, the real concern with yeast infections and yeast overgrowth is neither their prevalence nor the distress they cause. The real concern is that excess *Candida* in the intestines may penetrate the intestinal wall, causing yeast and other unwanted particles to be absorbed into the body.<sup>2</sup> The absorbed yeast particles then activate the immune system, that in turn results in numerous symptoms, including:

- ◆ Profound fatigue
- ◆ Constant headache
- ◆ Mood swings
- ◆ Sinus congestion
- ◆ Poor concentration
- ◆ Cravings for sweets
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Poor memory
- ◆ Numbness, burning, tingling
- ◆ Stomach pain
- ◆ Joint pain or swelling
- ◆ Muscle aching or weakness
- ◆ Constipation, diarrhea, bloating, gas, or belching
- ◆ Erectile dysfunction
- ◆ Loss of sexual desire
- ◆ Infertility
- ◆ Menstrual irregularity or cramping<sup>2</sup>



### Q. What exactly are probiotic supplements?

A. The word probiotic comes from pro, which means 'for, and bios, which means life: So probiotic literally means "for life". The term probiotic is used to describe

nutritional supplements and other products that contain live bacteria.

There are literally hundreds of probiotic supplements on the market. While they all promise to help restore and replenish our gut microflora, many are so deficient in

living or viable bacteria that the package they come in has more value than what is inside.<sup>5</sup>

**Q. How can I tell if the supplement I want to buy has viable bacteria?**

**A.** The best probiotic supplements meet two important criteria that are critical for everyday maintenance of a healthy GI tract. First, the bacteria contained inside the supplement need to be protected from the digestive juices and enzymes in the stomach. Read the label and look for the manufacturer's guarantee that the beneficial bacteria will reach the intestines alive, vibrant, and raring-to-go. Secondly, a high quality probiotic supplement should provide a mixture of both *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium longum*, the probiotic bacteria best known for restoring and replenishing your body's friendly gut microflora.<sup>6</sup>

**Q. I've seen probiotic supplements with enteric coatings. Will they protect the bacteria?**

**A.** Not necessarily. While traditional enteric coatings keep the tablet from breaking down in the stomach, they can't prevent stomach acids from entering the tablet. As a result, the stomach acid destroys the bacteria. The label on the probiotic supplement you are buying must promise to protect the *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium longum* bacteria during their long trek to your intestinal tract. A good quality probiotic nutritional supplement will have guaranteed levels of live bacteria not only when you pop it in your mouth, but when it reaches your intestines, too.<sup>6</sup>

Research into this problem has resulted in a unique coating technology which has been scientifi-

cally proven to protect the probiotics from these conditions by utilizing multiple layers. The first layer contains a paste of healthy probiotics suspended in a protective oil mixture. The second layer seals the probiotics in the capsule, and protects them from air and moisture. The third layer is made up of coatings that protect the probiotics from the acid environment of the stomach. The result is the delivery of the probiotics into the intestine where they are released intact and healthy to increase intestinal flora.<sup>6</sup>

**Q. What's the difference between the bacteria that cause disease and the friendly bacteria that help our immune system?**

**A.** All bacteria (there are at least 1,000,000 species) are one-celled organisms that live in huge groups called colonies. Some bacteria, like Group A *Streptococcus*, are well-known for their ability to make us miserable. These are the bacteria that cause impetigo, rheumatic fever, and those dreaded and painful strep throat infections.

The overwhelming majority of bacteria, however, are harmless to humans. And some are exceedingly beneficial." *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* are two of the best known groups of beneficial bacteria. They help in the making of buttermilk, cheese, sausage, and our good friend yogurt. These same bacterial strains are present in our intestines, where they adhere to our intestinal walls and work very hard to keep us healthy.<sup>3</sup>

**Q. How does the friendly gut microflora keep us healthy?**

**A.** While several different bacterial strains are present in our intestines, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifi-*

*dobacterium longum* are the most studied and understood. These two bacteria provide strength, stability, and balance to our health by:

- ◆ Helping bowel movements stay soft, well-formed, and easy to pass
- ◆ Making essential B vitamins, including folic acid, riboflavin, biotin, pantothenic acid, pyridoxine and cobalamin as well as Vitamin K
- ◆ Reducing the accumulation of cholesterol in the bloodstream
- ◆ Making lactase, the enzyme that's essential to the digestion of milk and milk products
- ◆ Elimination of embarrassing intestinal gas
- ◆ Regulation and balance of estrogen and testosterone - the reproductive hormones
- ◆ Combating diarrhea, especially diarrhea that's caused by use of antibiotics
- ◆ Crowding out the overgrowth of *Candida*, the yeast organisms responsible for serious and disabling health problems.<sup>1,5</sup>

**Q. What about yogurt? If I eat a lot of yogurt do I need probiotic supplements?**

Good question! The next time you eat yogurt, look closely at the label. Does it list the number of bacteria that are in each serving? How about the number present when packaged? Does it at least provide the bacterial count that was present when the yogurt was first processed? Most commercially made yogurts do not list the amount of viable bacteria in their products, simply because there is no way of knowing how many live bacteria are actually present. Due to current manufacturing processes, the amount of live, viable probiotics in commercially made yogurt is likely to be extremely small. And because most yogurt sold today



contains at least some sugar, you might be helping the Candida in your system grow and thrive, not your beneficial intestinal microflora.<sup>5,6</sup>

**Q. No matter what I do, I seem to get at least one yeast infection each year. Is there any natural way of treating yeast infections?**

**A.** The safest and most effective way to treat overgrown yeasts is to simply stop feeding them. Because Candida loves sugar, reducing your sugar intake can be very helpful. If you are experiencing repeated yeast infections, cut out refined carbohydrates like white bread, bakery products, alcohol, and sweets.<sup>1,5</sup>

All-natural anti-fungal herbal supplements are very helpful. The essential oils from oregano, thyme, peppermint, and goldenseal can inhibit the growth of Candida, as well as other disease causing bacteria and viruses. Scientists are increasingly recognizing that the volatile oils of oregano and thyme play a role in digestion and other body functions." Peppermint oil is widely used in Europe to support colon function," and goldenseal contains alkaloid compounds that show great promise for human health." New research has now shown that adding a fiber supplement to an all-natural Candida balancer will absorb the excess yeast and eliminate it from the body.<sup>1</sup>

**Q. What kind of fiber supplement can help with Candida balance?**

**A.** The most effective Candida binding fibers

are oat bran (the most soluble fiber of any grain),<sup>13</sup> pectin from citrus fruit (it provides fiber and helps strengthen immune cells, too),<sup>14</sup> psyllium husk (has more reabsorption ability than any other bowel-regulating fiber),<sup>15</sup> and guar gum, (a dietary fiber and stabilizer from the seed of the guar plant helps clear the colon of toxins and other wastes).<sup>1,7</sup>

Fiber has many other health benefits. Fiber can help reduce the risk of developing cancer, lower "bad" cholesterol levels, raise "good" cholesterol levels, strengthen diseased hearts, lessen our risk of diabetes, improve diabetes that is already diagnosed, help us lose weight, soak up excess estrogens, strengthen our immune systems, keep our bowels healthy, and relieve constipation.<sup>13</sup>

But even the best fibers are useless if they can reach the yeast overgrowth. In order for effective absorption and elimination to take place, fiber must be specially formulated for dispersion and complete release throughout the entire colon. Only then can the fibers latch onto the Candida overgrowth, bind them and keep them contained for elimination out of the body. Once you eliminate the Candida overgrowth, you'll want to take a probiotic supplement for intestinal restoration.<sup>1</sup>

**One important note**

If you are experiencing yeast infection symptoms for the first time, you need to see your doctor or other healthcare practitioner. It might not be a yeast infection and you need a proper diagnosis. You need to consult with your doctor if you are

pregnant or breast feeding. If you are having recurring yeast infections, you should also see your doctor, especially if you are at risk of diabetes. Recurring yeast infections can be a sign of diabetes. Finally, if you are experiencing symptoms of a yeast infection along with chills, fever, or a feeling of being

truly sick, you need to contact your doctor or other health care practitioner right away. You may have an infection that requires immediate care.

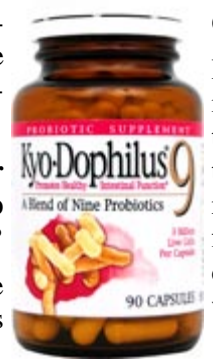
**Conclusion**

Whether you are experiencing your first yeast infection or your fifth, you can safely and effectively stop them from recurring by using all-natural dietary supplements. An effective yeast balancing system includes:

**Protected probiotic supplement** that includes active cultures of Lactobacillus acidophilus and Bifidobacterium longum to restore healthy microflora.

**Anti-fungal herbs** including essential peppermint, oregano and thyme oils and a goldenseal extract to control yeast overgrowth.

**Fiber supplement** that includes oat bran, pectin, psyllium husk and guar gum to restore gastrointestinal health.



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