

Women's wellness: vaginal yeast infections

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A vaginal yeast infection is a fungal infection that causes irritation, discharge and intense itching of the vagina and the vulva - the tissues at the vaginal opening. It's a type of vaginitis, or inflammation of the vagina. Vaginal yeast infection (also called vaginal candidiasis) affects up to three out of four women at some point in their lifetimes. Many women experience at least two episodes.

Although a [vaginal yeast infection](#) isn't considered a [sexually transmitted infection](#), you can spread the fungus through mouth to genital contact. Medications can effectively treat vaginal yeast infections. If you have recurrent yeast infections - four or more within a year - you may need a longer treatment course and a maintenance plan.

SYMPTOMS

Yeast infection symptoms can range from mild to moderate and include:

- Itching and irritation in the vagina and the tissues at the vaginal opening (vulva)
- A burning sensation, especially during intercourse or while urinating
- Redness and swelling of the vulva
- Vaginal pain and soreness
- Vaginal rash
- Watery vaginal discharge
- Thick, white, odor-free vaginal discharge with a cottage cheese appearance

COMPLICATED YEAST INFECTION

You might have a complicated yeast infection if:

- You have severe symptoms, such as extensive redness, swelling and itching that leads to tears or cracks (fissures) or sores

- You have four or more [yeast infections](#) in a year
- Your infection is caused by a type of candida other than *Candida albicans*
- You're pregnant
- You have uncontrolled diabetes
- Your immune system is weakened because of certain medications or conditions such as HIV infection

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

Make an appointment with your doctor if:

- This is the first time you've had yeast infection symptoms
- You're not sure whether you have a yeast infection
- Your symptoms don't disappear after treating with over-the-counter antifungal vaginal creams or suppositories
- You develop other [symptoms](#)

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