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## CANDIDA VAGINITIS (VAGINAL YEAST INFECTION)

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### WHAT IS CANDIDA VAGINITIS?

A **vaginal candida infection** (other names: vaginal yeast infection, vaginal candidiasis) is not a sexually transmitted disease (STD), but occurs when a harmless yeast (***Candida albicans***), which lives in the vagina, begins to overgrow. *Candida albicans* is a normal resident of the oral cavity, vagina, and intestines, but it doesn't grow in large numbers and doesn't cause any symptoms. However, if the balance is disrupted, the yeast can grow and cause symptoms. This occurs particularly after a course of antibiotics. The antibiotics kill certain bacteria on the skin, in the oral cavity, and vagina, giving the fungi the opportunity to proliferate. This is why women can experience increased vaginal discharge after a course of antibiotics.

Besides after a course of antibiotics, the yeast can also grow after a weakened immune system due to the use of certain medications like prednisone or an illness like HIV infection. Patients with diabetes are also more susceptible to a yeast infection.

A Candida infection is often called a "yeast infection". The difference between a fungus and a yeast is that a fungus grows as threads (hyphen), while a yeast grows as round cells. *Candida albicans* can take both forms.

### CANDIDA IS NOT AN STD

A Candida infection is not considered a sexually transmitted disease. Therefore, it is not necessary to warn partners or initiate treatment if a Candida infection is diagnosed. Men may experience temporary redness or flaking of the glans penis, caused by Candida, after unprotected contact with a woman with Candida vaginitis. Sometimes there is also some itching or burning. However, these symptoms resolve on their own. If necessary, they can apply an antifungal cream for a few days. Women do not contract a Candida infection through sexual contact, as the Candida is already present in the vagina. In women, the symptoms arise from an overgrowth of the fungus due to a disruption of the vaginal balance.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CANDIDA VULVOVAGINITIS?

Candida vaginitis is not serious and is easily treated. However, it can recur. The main symptom is increased vaginal discharge (vaginal discharge). The discharge can appear white and grainy, sometimes crumbly, like cottage cheese. Other symptoms include itching, redness, irritation, or burning. Urination and intercourse can be painful. A candida infection can also spread to the external genitals or the groin folds. This causes symptoms such as itching, redness, flaking, and sometimes blisters or pustules. Sore spots can develop in the groin folds with red, irritated, and moist skin, sometimes with cracks.

### HOW IS THE DIAGNOSIS MADE?

The diagnosis is usually made based on the clinical picture and its appearance. It is possible to examine some discharge under a microscope, where fungal threads or yeast globules may be visible.

### HOW IS CANDIDA VAGINITIS TREATED?

For women, a vaginal tablet is usually prescribed to be inserted into the vagina. There are several versions. One example is Canesten (clotrimazole) Gyno-3. This consists of three vaginal tablets to be inserted on three consecutive days. There is also a stronger version (Canesten Gyno-1) that only needs to be used once. The vaginal tablets dissolve in the vagina.

There are also antifungal creams specifically designed for vaginal application. The cream comes with an applicator.

If the external area of the vagina is also affected (redness, flaking, itching), an antifungal cream for external use is also prescribed. You should apply this to and around the vagina once or twice a day until the symptoms subside. Men with irritation of the glans caused by Candida can also use such a cream. It is best to avoid sex during treatment. This allows the vaginal (or penile) lining to heal more easily.

It is also possible to treat candida vaginitis with antifungal capsules that you have to take (systemic treatment).

### **Products for the treatment of candida vaginitis:**

#### ***Vaginal tablets:***

- Canesten gyno 3 (clotrimazole), 3 vaginal tablets of 200 mg + applicator.  
Insert one vaginal tablet for 3 days.
- Canesten gyno 1 (clotrimazole), 1 vaginal tablet of 500 mg + applicator.  
Insert one tablet once.

#### ***Vaginal creams (for use in the vagina):***

- Canesten gyno 3 (clotrimazole 2%). Vaginal cream 20 mg/g; 20 g + 3 applicators.  
Insert the contents of the applicator ( $\pm$  5 g) for 3 consecutive days.
- Canesten gyno 1 (clotrimazole 10%). Vaginal cream 100 mg/g; 5 g + applicator.  
Insert 5 g of cream once.
- Canesten gyno (clotrimazole 1%). Vaginal cream 10 mg/g; 35 g + 6 applicators.  
Insert the contents of the applicator ( $\pm$  5 g) for 6 consecutive days.

#### ***External creams for treating the outside of the vagina:***

- Loprox (ciclopirox 1%) cream, 30 g tube.  
Apply once or twice a day until the symptoms disappear.
- Daktarin (miconazole nitrate 2% (20 mg/g)) cream.  
Apply twice a day until the symptoms disappear.

#### ***Treatment with antifungal capsules:***

- fluconazole, one 150 mg capsule once.
- itraconazole, 200 mg twice daily (2 x 2 100 mg capsules) for 1 day, or 200 mg daily for 3 days.

### **WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS?**

Candida is easy to treat; the symptoms will disappear quickly. However, it can also return quite easily. If you developed a vaginal yeast infection after a course of antibiotics, it will likely recur the next time you take such a course. You can prevent this by immediately starting the antifungal treatment after the course.

