

MANAGING YOUR CANDIDIASIS



Candida under the microscope

Anyone can develop candidiasis, or infection with the yeast *Candida*, a fungus. *Candida* fungi normally live on the skin and are harmless, but they can overgrow and cause an infection.

F. Netter M.D.



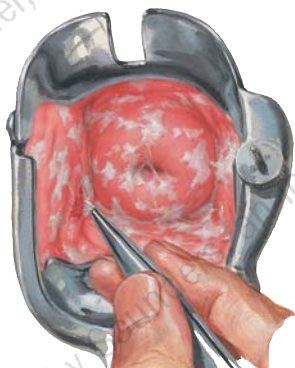
Pregnancy, diabetes, a weak immune system, certain medicines, and HIV infection can increase your risk of candidiasis. Diaper rash in babies is also usually due to candidiasis.



Candidiasis usually occurs in the genital area, mouth, skin folds, or nails.



The doctor will use a swab to take samples from the mouth or genital area or will take scrapings from the nail and send them to a laboratory for diagnosis.



Genital area (cervix)

What Is Candidiasis?

Candidiasis is infection with a type of fungus, a yeast called *Candida*. Candidiasis can occur in genital areas, mouth, skin folds, or nails. In the vagina, candidiasis is called yeast vaginitis. In the mouth, candidiasis is called thrush. Diaper rash in babies is often due to candidiasis.

What Causes Candidiasis?

Anyone can get candidiasis. *Candida* fungi normally live on the skin and are harmless. Too much moisture favors overgrowth of the fungus and can lead to infection. Pregnancy, diabetes mellitus, weak immune system, and certain medicines such as antibiotics and corticosteroids can increase chances of infection.

What Are the Symptoms of Candidiasis?

Women with vaginal candidiasis have intense itching in the vagina. Burning during urination, white patches on the vagina surface, and an odorless cottage cheese-like liquid coming from the vagina may occur.

Mouth candidiasis causes raised white patches inside the mouth or on the tongue, splitting or cracking on the side of the mouth, and swollen gums or red and white sores on the gums.

Nail candidiasis causes swelling around nails and separation between nails and cuticles, pain around the nail base, and yellow or blackish-brown nails.

Skin with candidiasis may itch, look moist, and appear irritated.

How Is Candidiasis Diagnosed?

The doctor will use a swab to take samples from the affected area, such as the genitals or mouth, or will take scrapings from the nail and send them to a laboratory for diagnosis.



Antifungal medicine—pills, ointment, vaginal cream, suppositories, powder, or spray—usually clears up the infection in 1 to 2 weeks.

The fungus *Candida* needs moisture to live, so wear loose cotton clothing to keep your skin cool and dry and reduce infection risk.



Don't keep your hands in water too long. Moisture promotes growth of the fungus.



Keep your skin cool and dry.

How Is Candidiasis Treated?

The doctor will prescribe antifungal medicine (pills, ointment, vaginal cream, suppositories, powder, or spray). The doctor may want to treat partners with genital candidiasis to avoid spreading the infection. Wear loose cotton clothing to keep your skin cool and dry.

Genital candidiasis will clear up in 4 to 7 days. Mouth and skin candidiasis will clear up in 1 or 2 weeks. Nail candidiasis often needs longer treatment.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Candidiasis:

- ✓ **DO** keep your genital area clean and wear cotton, loose-fitting underpants if you have genital candidiasis. Lose weight if needed, and don't use harsh chemicals such as douches. Practice safe sex (use condoms).
- ✓ **DO** avoid oral sex if you have mouth candidiasis.
- ✓ **DO** dry your hands well after washing if you have nail candidiasis. Don't soak your hands in water.
- ✓ **DO** change the baby's diaper often and keep the area dry for diaper rash.
- ✓ **DO** keep your skin clean and dry.
- ✓ **DO** make sure that your diabetes is controlled.
- ✓ **DO** take antibiotics only when prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if the infection continues despite treatment.
- ⊗ **DON'T** wear tight panty hose or have intercourse until the infection clears up if you have genital candidiasis.
- ⊗ **DON'T** put rubber pants on your baby. It will increase the risk of diaper rash.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Website: <http://www.acog.org>

- Obgyn.net

Website: <http://www.obgyn.net>

- American Academy of Dermatology

Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (503-7546)

Website: <http://www.aad.org>

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES