

What is Candida?

Article by Lindsay Duncan, CN.

"Candida Albicans is a fungus that is present in everybody. It is found on the skin and mucous membranes. In small amounts it is harmless but when its growth increases drastically it can be devastating. It is considered one of the most prevalent yet un-recognized conditions of modern man.

"In a healthy body the Candida Albicans fungus is kept in control by the friendly bacteria. However, medicinal antibiotics and those found in some meat have upset the delicate balance in our bodies. These antibiotics reduce and weaken the friendly bacteria, allowing Candida to flourish. Birth control pills, cortisone and certain other drugs also upset the balance. Candida thrives on sugar and carbohydrates, mouldy foods such as beer, vinegar and pickles.

"The Candida fungus releases wastes into the bloodstream that have a profound effect on the nervous and immune systems. This creates a variety of symptoms, including food cravings (for sweets, alcoholic beverages, chocolate, etc.), excessive allergies, diaper (nappy) rash, vaginal infections, depression, food sensitivity, exhaustion, headaches, irritability, memory loss, obesity or excessive weight loss, gas and bloating, diarrhoea or constipation, PMS, earaches, numbness and many others. Candida affects physical, mental and emotional well-being. Thinking becomes unclear and irrational and often is unnoticed to the victim.

"Candida may be one of the primary causes of ill health and obesity in today because it creates a downward health spiral. As it becomes prevalent in the body, a person craves carbohydrates and sweets, allowing it to thrive even further. This impedes the immune system and creates symptoms and excess weight. On and on it goes until the body's immune system is weakened and symptoms are intolerable. At this time, a physician may be consulted with further antibiotics prescribed, killing off more friendly bacteria and allowing Candida to proliferate. In this advanced stage, acute depression and suicidal tendencies may emerge.

"Candida infection is difficult to diagnose since the fungus is present in every healthy human. It also creates a variety of symptoms. The best way to determine whether Candida is affecting you is to look at your diet and your symptoms. If you feel addicted to sugar, crave breads or other carbohydrates, are experiencing any other symptoms or just don't feel well, chances are you are being affected by Candida and should consider a change in diet.

"This change involves eating vegetables and proteins such as fish and other lean meats (seek a natural source) and avoiding carbohydrates, sugars, alcoholic beverages and fermented foods. Even fruit and fruit juices may not be suitable, since they contain concentrated fructose, a natural fruit sugar. Dairy products should be used in small amounts because they contain lactose, a milk sugar. This change in diet is not as simple as it may sound because the cravings for sugar and carbohydrates are extremely strong and may overpower any controlled approach to eating.

"Once you have been off sugar and carbohydrates for a few days, you will begin to feel in control again, as though a fog has been lifted from your brain. After a week or so, you may slowly add fresh fruits. Fruits MUST be eaten alone and on an empty stomach. Fruit is very easily digested and moves through the body quickly. However, if it is eaten with a heavier food like protein, fat or starch, the sugary fruit will remain in the stomach until the heavier food is broken down. The fruit then ferments and spoils in the stomach, thus aggravating Candida. This is why many Candida victims have had problems eating fruit. You can also add natural whole grains like brown rice to your diet. Continue to avoid foods containing yeast for a while (e.g. breads, wine and beer) to maintain control of the fungus growth. A program of herbal and nutritional supplements is as important as the change in diet. There are a number of natural fungus inhibiting herbs that are very helpful for treating Candida Albicans.

”Once the Candida is cleansed from the system, the friendly bacterial balance can be restored with acidophilus (found in yoghurt and in supplements). The benefits of regaining a yeast free lifestyle are tremendous. Your thoughts become clear again and your body begins to feel healthy and able to proceed with a happy life. In the future, when you see your symptoms recurring, you will become more aware of your diet and lifestyle and make appropriate changes to foster your own health and well-being.

“Remember, a little Candida is OK. The Candida albicans fungus normally lives in the body but is controlled by the immune system and a balance of more-beneficial organisms. Severe infections though may produce inflammation, redness, swelling, and sometimes pinpoint bleeding.

”Vaginitis Candida infections may cause vaginitis. This produces itching of the external and internal genitalia and, often, a white discharge that can be thick and Curdy like cottage cheese (a form of leukorrhoea).”

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Contributing factors to Candida Albicans

Avoid tight clothing Vaginal yeast infections are three times more common in women who wear nylon underwear or tights than those wearing cotton underwear. *Heidrich F, Berg A, Gergman R, et al. Clothing factors and vaginitis. J Fam Pract 1984;19:491-494.*

Antibiotics: When antibiotics are used they tend to kill all single-cell creatures living symbiotically with us. Afterwards, the strongest and most virulent tend to grow back fastest. This means that a pattern or regular antibiotic use and recurrent infections will develop. If antibiotics are used, always follow up with probiotic supplements. Using lactobacillus supplements during antibiotic use can reduce the risk of subsequent Candida vaginitis. *Eschenback H. Vaginal infection. Clin Ob Gyn 1983;26:186-202. Vincent J, Voomett R, and Riley R. Antibacterial activity associated with Lactobaccillus acidophilus. J Bact 1959;A78:477-484.*

Hormonal drugs: Oral contraceptives and steroids often contribute to Candida infections. Address predisposing health conditions Pregnancy, diabetes mellitus, and HIV infection are associated with an increased risk of Candida infections. Allergies can cause chronic recurrent yeast vaginitis which can be resolved by avoiding the allergens and treating the allergies. *Kudelco N. Allergy in chronic monilial vaginitis. Ann Allergy 1971;29:266-267.*

Diet: Decrease consumption of simple sugars and starches A high-sugar diet encourages the overgrowth of Candida albicans. *Horowitz BJ, Edelstein SW, Lippman L. Sugar chromatography studies in recurrent Candida vulvovaginitis. J Reproduc Med 1984;29(7):441.*

Women who have a yeast infection (or are predisposed to such infections) should avoid highly refined foods which are preferred by the Candida fungus. They should avoid refined sugar, fruits, fruit juices, refined carbohydrates, and alcohol.

Improve digestion of proteins The acid in the stomach is an important line of defense against pathogens. Supplemental HCl acid may be helpful. Food which is sufficiently broken down and absorbed is not available as food for parasites. Avoid antacids. Of course, rectifying contributing factors (above) is a primary therapeutic option.