

Yeast Infections DO-IT-YOURSELF TREATMENTS

If you are reasonably aware of your body and can catch yeast infections early enough, you almost never need to rely on "medical" treatments.

The remedies listed below are in no particular order, except that the more common ones are towards the top of the list. These treatments should clear up most *Candida* infections; do feel free to combine 2 or 3 of them if you think you need it.

INTERNAL APPLICATION

- **YOGURT** contains *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, a bacterium that also happens to be found in healthy vaginas. Acidophilus kills yeast by producing hydrogen peroxide. Be sure to use plain, unflavored yogurt with no added sugar, and be double sure that it contains live acidophilus cultures. Most women using yogurt to treat a yeast infection simply apply it directly to the vulva and gently inject some into the vagina. One option is to put the yogurt in plastic tampon applicators or into the fingers of a disposable rubber glove and freeze them- then you've got little yogurt-sicles to use next time you get a yeast infection! Although it is really cold once it is inserted, the cold actually is soothing compared to the burning that usually accompanies a yeast infection. Other people use syringes (with no needle!) to squirt it inside the vagina. Apply once or twice a day until at least a day after your symptoms clear up. Another possibility is to insert acidophilus pills from your local supermarket or health food store (look in the refrigerated section).
- **GARLIC** contains natural antifungal substances that kill off yeast. Use a fresh clove of garlic and carefully peel all the papery skin off it. Be careful not to nick the clove as you are peeling it, because the juice can sting some women when inserting it vaginally. Next, tie the ends with unwaxed dental floss, leaving a bit of string dangling so you'll be able to pull it out afterward. Insert it into your vagina. Leave it in for several hours at a time, or overnight, and be sure to remove it in the morning. For early or mild infections, nighttime treatments may be enough; try several nights in a row, until one day after the symptoms disappear. If your infection is more severe, put a fresh clove in every morning and every night. If this makes you nervous, you could also try the garlic capsules that are sold as a dietary supplement in many health food stores, but be sure to get the kind with a soft coating that will dissolve inside you.
- **TEATREE OIL** is available at many natural foods stores and is widely used for yeast infections. Teatree oil can sting if it comes in contact with the vulva, so it is recommended to use an applicator tampon, lift off the top part of the applicator to expose the tampon, apply a lubricant such as K.Y. jelly, vaseline or olive oil to the top ½ of the tampon then apply a few drops of pure tea tree oil over the lubricant. Put the tampon back into the applicator and insert vaginally. The lubricant keeps the teatree oil from absorbing into the tampon and the applicator protects the sensitive skin around the vulva.

- **BORIC ACID** is a great yeast fighter. You will need some size 00 capsules from a pharmacy or natural food store and boric acid filler which will be used to make the suppositories. Insert 2 capsules filled with boric acid, about 600 mg total, into your vagina every night for a week. (To be extra sure, continue this treatment twice a week for the next 3 weeks.) This is a pretty strong treatment, and is capable of effectively treating even severe or persistent yeast infections. Some women find that the boric acid causes some superficial burning and discomfort for the first few days, and may cause large amounts of vaginal discharge. Discontinue use if the burning is severe.
- **GENTIAN VIOLET** is a traditional remedy for yeast and other infections that pre-dates most modern antifungals and antibiotics. It is carried in some pharmacies or health food stores. The idea is to swab it all over the vulva and up into the vagina once or twice a day for a few days. Wear black clothes or use thick pads, because gentian violet is purple and stains everything it touches. Warning: some women are allergic to it, so try a small patch on skin before inserting it into the vagina.

DOUCHES

Although douching is generally a bad idea when you are healthy, there are many effective home remedies for yeast infections that involve douching. Be careful when douching to keep the bag below your pelvis and to exert only slight pressure, as really strong pressure might drive the solution up through the cervix into the uterus. Also, be careful when inserting and removing the nozzle, as damage to the vaginal walls can lead to more serious yeast or bacterial infections.

- **HYDROGEN PEROXIDE** is produced naturally by bacteria in your vagina, and kills yeast. If the bacteria aren't doing enough by themselves, try mixing 1 teaspoon of ordinary 3% hydrogen peroxide from your market or pharmacy with 1 cup of water. Use as a douche once a day until the day after your symptoms disappear.
- **TEATREE OIL** is an effective anti-yeast treatment and can be used straight (see above), but needs to be highly diluted to use as a douche. Make a stock solution by combining 1 teaspoon tea tree oil with 1 teaspoon isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol, which should turn milky white. Store in a dropper bottle. Make a douche by adding 10 drops of the stock solution to a pint of water, and use once a day for a week.
- **ACIDIC DOUCHES** restore the natural pH of the vagina, which is relatively inhospitable to yeast. Try making a solution with a quart or liter of water and 2 tablespoons of white or cidar vinegar, or the juice of half a lemon, or 1 teaspoon vitamin C. Use every day to treat mild infections, or in combination with other treatments for more severe infections.

TEMPORARY ITCH RELIEF

To relieve vulvar itching, try making a paste of slippery elm powder and a little water, and then apply as needed. Another option is to keep aloe vera juice in the fridge, and then soak a cotton pad in it and apply it to your vulva as needed. Slippery elm or aloe will only relieve itching, though, and **won't kill yeast**, so they must be combined with an antifungal treatment to really stop the problem.

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