

Yeast Infection During Pregnancy

What is a yeast infection?

Yeast infection occurs when the normal amounts of acid and yeast in the vagina are out of balance. This allows yeast to grow too much too fast. This can lead to an uncomfortable, but not serious, problem called yeast infection.

Yeast infections are more common during pregnancy than any other time in a woman's life. Normal pregnancy discharge should not be confused with the signs/symptoms of an infection. If you think you may have a yeast infection, this information will help you to discuss it with your doctor. Even though yeast infections have no major effect on pregnancy, they are often harder to control when you are pregnant. This can cause discomfort for you. Don't waste time in getting help.

What causes a yeast infection?

A yeast infection can be caused by one or more of these things:

- Changes in hormones that come with pregnancy or before your period
- Taking hormones or birth control pills
- Taking antibiotics, or steroids
- High blood sugar, as in diabetes
- Vaginal intercourse
- Douching

Why are yeast infections more common during pregnancy?

Your body is going through many changes right now. This includes changes to your vagina. Hormones can cause an imbalance in the normal organisms within the vagina allowing yeast to form.

What are the symptoms of yeast infections?

The symptoms of a yeast infection may include one or more of these:

- Discharge that is usually white, similar to cottage cheese and may smell like yeast/bread
- Other discharge that may be greenish or yellowish, also similar to cottage cheese and may smell like yeast/bread
- Very large amounts of discharge
- Redness, itching, or irritation of the lips of the vagina
- Burning during urination or sexual intercourse

Only a doctor can diagnosis a yeast infection. If you have symptoms, you should see your doctor.

This information has been reviewed and recommended for use by the UAMS/CPED/Patient Education Advisory Committee.

What else could this be?

If you have symptoms similar to a yeast infection, but a doctor has decided that you do not have a yeast infection, you may have one of the things listed below. Talk to your doctor.

- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) like Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, & Trichomoniasis
- A vaginal infection called Bacterial Vaginosis

How do I know for sure if I have a yeast infection?

At your doctor's office or medical clinic, a clinician will use a simple, painless swab on your vagina and look at the discharge through a microscope. Usually, upon looking at the vagina, a doctor can tell whether or not you have a yeast infection. In rare cases the discharge may be sent to a lab.

How are yeast infections treated during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, doctors often suggest vaginal creams and suppositories only. Oral medications have not been proven to be safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding. It may take 10-14 days to find relief or completely clear up the infection while you are pregnant. If you don't treat them, yeast infections can pass to your baby's mouth during delivery. This is called "thrush".

How can I prevent a yeast infection or recurring yeast infections?

Most yeast infections can usually be avoided if you:

- Wear loose, cotton, breathable clothing, and cotton underwear.
- After regular, thorough washing, use your blow dryer on a low, cool setting to help dry your genital area.
- Always wipe from front to back after using the restroom.
- Shower as soon as you are finished swimming. Change out of swimsuits, workout clothes or other damp clothes as soon as possible.
- Don't douche
- Don't use feminine hygiene sprays, sanitary pads or tampons that contain deodorant,
- Do not use bubble bath, colored or perfumed toilet paper.
- Include yogurt with "lactobacillus acidophilus" in your diet.
- Limit sugar intake, as sugar promotes the growth of yeast.
- Get plenty of rest to make it easier for your body to fight infections.

When should I contact my doctor?

If you have the symptoms described in this article, call your doctor now. Yeast infections have similar symptoms of other infections. It is important that you find out what is causing your problems to help you get the right treatment. If untreated, the condition could get worse and complicate your delivery.

If you don't get better within three days of starting treatment, or if symptoms get worse or come back after treatment, you should contact your doctor again.

This article was adapted from the American Pregnancy Association, www.americanpregnancy.org.

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