

## Monilia (Yeast) Infection

There is normally a small amount of yeast (*Candida albicans*) present in the vagina. A yeast infection occurs when there is an overabundance of yeast, often caused by a change in the pH balance of the vagina. Yeast infections are not usually sexually transmitted.

### Some factors that may increase susceptibility to yeast infections

- Increased stress
- Pregnancy
- Use of antibiotics (protective bacteria are destroyed by antibiotics allowing yeast overgrowth)
- Use of hormonal contraceptives
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Immunosuppression

### Signs and symptoms

- Increased amount of discharge
- Thick, white, clumpy (cottage cheese-like) discharge
- Redness, itching, burning in vaginal/vulvar area

### Treatment

The goal of treatment is to reduce the overgrowth of yeast organisms and return the vagina to a healthy balance. Anti-fungal medications are available in creams, suppositories and tablet form and do not require prescriptions. These medications must be used inside the vagina to be effective. Anti-fungal creams can also be applied to the external tissue to lessen irritation and itching. Vaginal yeast medications can be found in pharmacies and most grocery stores. Medication can also be obtained at McKinley's Health Resource Center's located at McKinley Health Center, Main Lobby, Information/HRC Counter or at the Illini Union, OASIS, Room 40 (lower level). Partners do not require treatment unless symptoms are present. Male symptoms may include redness, and flaking skin and itching in the genital area. Treatment usually consists of anti-fungal cream applied twice daily to the affected area.

Avoid intercourse while treating yeast infections, and do not scratch irritated skin. This may cause increased symptoms and pain. Always follow the instructions included in the package and complete the entire course of medication even if symptoms resolve before the medication is gone. If your menstrual period starts while using vaginal medication, continue to use the medication inside the vagina as instructed. Avoid tampon use at this time. Remember also that vaginal medication may cause condoms to break more easily.

### To lessen the risk of vaginal infections

- Use condoms when having sexual contact or intercourse.
- Wear cotton, all white underwear.
- Avoid tight fitting and synthetic fabrics. Avoid prolonged wearing of pantyhose.
- Avoid daily use of panty liners, pads or tampons. Do not use scented products.
- Use water based lubricants; avoid all oil-based products (i.e. Vaseline or baby oil).
- Avoid using douches or other feminine hygiene products, unless specifically advised by a health care provider.
- Drink eight glasses of water daily.
- When cleansing after urination or bowel movements, wipe from front to back.
- Stay healthy by eating well and getting a good night's rest on a regular basis.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>