

Digestive Care



Yeast: A GROWING HEALTH CONCERN

Yeast Overgrowth: Cause and Effect

In the past, yeast overgrowth was considered a health issue only for a relatively small percentage of the population: infants and those with compromised immune systems. Yet, while there is no question that yeast overgrowth can have profound health effects on patients who fit into these two categories, today a growing number of physicians believe yeast overgrowth is associated with many common gastrointestinal and genitourinary problems.¹ Considering that Candidiasis is the most common mycotic infection (one caused by a fungus) that results in a wide variety of diseases, this is a reasonable assumption.

Yeast can range from superficial disorders such as diaper rash to invasive, rapidly fatal infections in immunocompromised hosts.² Once considered merely an inconvenience, today evidence suggests that yeast overgrowth (with its extensive array of symptoms) is a very serious health

condition that can lead to autoimmune disorders and even chronic disease.

Yeast, is an opportunistic fungus that normally inhabits the mouth, throat, gastrointestinal tract, and vagina.³ The normal ratio of healthy or neutral bacteria to yeast is one million to one. Yeast ordinarily exists harmlessly in the body,⁴ however, when it has the opportunity to proliferate beyond normal numbers, trouble can result.⁵ Technically, **Yeast** is a mold. However, since it lacks chlorophyll it is unable to produce its own food through sunlight-induced photosynthesis. As a result, it must depend upon a host organism—such as the human body—for nourishment.⁶ Yeast is able to survive, and in some cases thrive, in the body due to a strong cell wall. The cell wall of a typical Yeast cell is rigid and provides protection from the outside environment. It is composed of glucan (glucose), chitin (N-acetyl D-glucosamine), mannan (polymers of mannose, a simple sugar), and lipids (fats), making it quite resistant to any degradation. This resistance to outside

degradation is a major reason *Candida albicans* is able to proliferate under certain conditions.

Candida albicans occurs naturally in the human body, and overgrowth is triggered by a number of

causes. The most common contributors to Yeast overgrowth are repetitive antibiotic and oral contraceptive usage, and the over-consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates. However, stress, heavy metal toxicity, and the use of some other medications can also contribute to Yeast overgrowth. Without a doubt, the risk factors that contribute to Yeast overgrowth are those to which nearly every American is exposed.



Repetitive antibiotic and oral contraceptive usage contributes to Yeast overgrowth.

Antibiotics

Many consider the widespread use (or misuse) of antibiotics the major contributor to Candida overgrowth. Antibiotics are designed to destroy harmful bacteria. However, antibiotics are indiscriminate killers; they also destroy the beneficial bacteria in the gut, which can result in an imbalance of gut flora. This condition—known as dysbiosis—can lead to a weakening of the body's ability to defend itself from infection and disease, and it can also lead to decreased immune function. Often antibiotics are prescribed for illnesses such as the common cold, but because the cold is caused by a virus, antibiotics are an ineffective treatment. Still, it is estimated that 50 million unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions are written every year.⁷ This evidence suggests that Candida

overgrowth can affect any number of people, many of whom are unaware that they have even been affected.

Oral Contraceptives

Since their inception more than 40 years ago, oral contraceptives have become a staple for many American women. In fact, more than 80 percent have used "the pill" at one time or another in their lives.⁸ Furthermore, worldwide more than 100 million women rely on the pill, making it the most popular contraceptive method in 78 of 150 surveyed countries, according to a new report from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.⁹ Due to their overwhelming popularity, the drawbacks associated with oral contraceptives are often overlooked. However, much like antibiotics, they can cause an imbalance in the ratio of gut flora (beneficial to harmful bacteria), thus contributing to a state of dysbiosis.

Sugar and Carbs

The last major contributing factor to Yeast overgrowth is the over-consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates. Unfortunately, both have become staples of the typical American diet and can have a significant effect on the health of the body. As stated previously, Yeast is a organism that is unable to produce its own food as plants do. This means that it requires a food source of another origin, and yeast organisms particularly like sugar. Sadly, the typical American not only obliges the yeast but also provides enough energy for it to flourish. A 2004 study released by the University of California at Berkeley revealed that three types of foods—sweets and desserts; soft drinks; and alcoholic beverages—account for nearly 25 percent of all calories consumed by those in the U.S., with soft drinks, pastries, pizza and potato chips all in the list of top 10 foods consumed.

Repetitive antibiotic and oral contraceptive usage, the over-consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates, stress, and numerous drugs and toxic metals contribute to Yeast overgrowth.

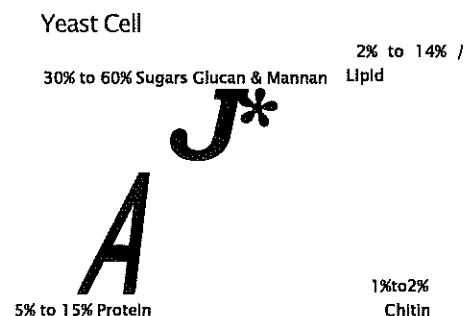
I A Difficult Diagnosis

Due to the numerous symptoms associated with Yeast overgrowth, diagnosing the condition is often difficult.

Such symptoms can include:

- Bad breath
- Blurred vision
- Brain fog
- Chemical sensitivities
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Food sensitivities or allergies
- Insomnia
- Joint and muscle pain
- Persistent gas and bloating
- Recurrent bladder infections
- Recurrent vaginal yeast infections
- Sinus problems
- Sugar cravings

Furthermore, the symptoms manifest differently in each person because the yeast attacks the area(s) of greatest weakness. ■



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Yeast:

WHY BE CONCERNED?

Today many healthcare professionals are regarding Yeast overgrowth as more than just an inconvenience. This is likely due to increasing evidence that the condition can lead to serious health issues if left untreated.

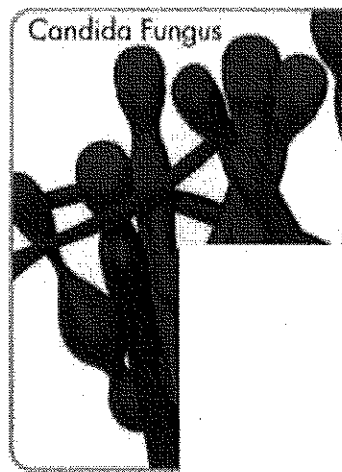
Fungi in the Blood

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Yeast, is the fourth most common blood infection among hospitalized patients in the United States. In fact, the CDC found that candidemia occurs in 8 of every 100,000 persons per year.¹² Considering that it is a major factor in the development of Leaky Gut Syndrome, the frequency with which Yeast overgrowth occurs is frightening. Leaky Gut Syndrome occurs when undigested food particles penetrate the bowel wall and enter the bloodstream. The body views these particles as foreign invaders and produces antibodies in order to destroy them. This can ultimately result in the development of allergies and even some autoimmune diseases.

Deep Organs

While the connection between autoimmune disease and Yeast overgrowth is, in itself, reason for great concern, the CDC warns that if the infection (Yeast overgrowth) spreads to deep organs such as kidneys, liver, bones, muscles, joints, spleen, or eyes, additional symptoms may develop depending on the site of infection. If the infection does not

respond to treatment, the patient's organs may fail and cause death.¹³



Controlling Yeast

Because of its serious nature, controlling Yeast overgrowth is a must. Of course, there are different approaches to controlling Yeast overgrowth. While anti-fungal drugs are a common remedy, the CDC warns that the overuse of anti-fungal medications can increase the chance that eventually they will be ineffective, as the fungus will develop a resistance to such medications.¹⁴ This can result in an even more severe case of Yeast overgrowth. At Holistic Specialists, we choose to address the condition from every angle with a natural approach. It begins with several

minor lifestyle changes and ends with taking the appropriate supplements to help control Yeast and restore the proper balance of bacteria to yeast. ■

The Solution:

Lifestyle Choices

Medications

When possible, eliminate or minimize the use of antibiotics, steroids, immunosuppressant drugs, and oral contraceptives. Remember to consult your physician before making any medication changes.

Diet

Adopt a daily diet that does not encourage Yeast growth. Eliminate sugar and sweeteners, as well as fruit and fruit juices (because they contain naturally-occurring sugars), with the exception of Granny Smith apples. If a sweetener is desired, use one made from the Chinese Lo Han fruit. Avoid cheese and commercial dairy products (except yogurt), soy sauce, mushrooms, breads with yeast, baked goods, peanuts, refined foods, and any foods causing sensitivity or an allergic reaction; also avoid coffee, soda, alcoholic beverages, and any food with vinegar or wine. Finally, eat plenty of vegetables and lean protein. Soups and stews are excellent. Substitute yeast-free sourdough bread.

Water

Drink plenty of purified water, at least half your body weight in ounces each day (for example, a 120-pound person would require 60 ounces of water, or seven tall glasses).

Exercise

Improve immune function by stimulating lymph flow through exercise and deep breathing.