

Oh, Candida!

We live with *Candida albicans* all the time. It's a yeast which is found in various places in the body. When Candida gets out of balance, problems arise and there are many causes. Major stress, birth control pills, bad diet and a big dose of antibiotics can all let it get out of control. However the antibiotics are probably the most likely as they suppress normal intestinal bacteria that control yeast and antibiotic-resistant microbes can arise. This is why it's always important to have probiotics after or even during a course of antibiotics, and those probiotic drinks at the supermarket are better than nothing if you can't afford probiotics.

What are the symptoms? With chronic candidiasis you'll have fatigue, allergies, chemical sensitivities, gut disturbances like bloating and wind, bad breath, depression or mood swings, low immune function and you'll generally just feel rotten and sick all over. In bad cases, you'll find a cottage-cheese like growth on your tongue, and there can be overgrowths in the gut and vagina.

*Candida albicans* feeds on yeasts, moulds, fungi, dairy and sugars. Stomach acid can inhibit candida buildup, so if you're on antacids or are older and have declining stomach acid, you may need to supplement with hydrochloric acid (HCl) tablets. There are much better treatments than antacids for heartburn or relief from ulcers anyway, and we need our stomach acid to break down protein and absorb nutrients such as vitamin B12. Slippery elm powder is very healing, and coats the gut to protect it. Your practitioner can advise on special supplements designed to help heal the gut and relieve the pain.

If you have really bad candidiasis, the dietary changes are temporary but radical as you need to leave off everything it feeds on, and you'd be surprised just how much that affects. However, if it isn't too bad, there are several things that can be done. One is supplementing with another yeast called *Saccharomyces boulardii*, which inhibits the buildup of candida. But it's not a full cure.

Having candida can also affect your prognosis if you have other diseases. For example, if you contract Ross River fever or similar insect-borne viruses, your symptoms may be much worse, or atypical, confusing doctors and perhaps leading to the wrong treatment strategy. I have treated someone who had this very problem.

Treating bad candida isn't much fun, though once it's conquered you WILL feel human again, so you always need to keep that goal in mind. You can get worsening of symptoms as the candida dies off and releases toxins so supervision by a qualified practitioner is important, and treatment should not be rushed. A high fibre diet promoting prompt excretion plus liver support throughout the process is important. Supporting foods and herbs like garlic which has many benefits including antifungal activity, and lots of antioxidants will help a lot. Apple cider vinegar is also a useful adjunct in treatment.

So, if you have a problem with *Candida albicans* (and it's not uncommon), see your natural health practitioner for a full case history to find the cause, and supportive treatment and supplements to make you feel well again. You can't get rid of all candida, but you can put it back in its rightful place so you can live with it.

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[Advice in these columns is of a general nature only and is not to be taken as specific treatment.]