

If left unchecked, this insidious yeast can create a host of nasty symptoms in the body. Nutritionist Tara Thorne shows you how you can prevent it.

Yes! *You can beat* candida

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DO you suffer from memory loss? Anxiety? Recurrent yeast infections? PMS? Brain fog? Do you crave sugar, alcohol, or bread? Maybe you took a course of antibiotics and haven't felt the same since, or perhaps you have upsetting digestive symptoms. An overgrowth of yeast called *Candida albicans* might be to blame.

It's normal to have a certain amount of candida living in your digestive tract and usually it is controlled by a healthy immune system and beneficial microorganisms, including health-promoting bacteria. The problem arises when candida becomes overgrown, which can be due to the use of antibiotics, oral contraceptives and steroids like prednisone, as well as a diet high in sweets, alcohol consumption, chronic stress, diabetes or a weakened immune system; hormonal changes can also upset the balance of candida. Symptoms can be vague, non-specific, and easily attributed to other health conditions, making a diagnosis tricky (see box “Are you at risk?”).

NATURAL CURES

There are many things you can do via diet and supplements to restore balance. For example, natural antifungals can play a pivotal role, including oil of oregano (antifungal and antimicrobial), garlic, (antimicrobial), berberine (antifungal), citrus seed acid (antimicrobial), caprylic acid (an antifungal found in coconut oil), *Gymnema sylvestre* (a herb that has been shown to be effective in inhibiting candida growth) and high-dose biotin (antifungal). Die-off reactions to rebalancing candida are common, so don't be alarmed if you feel worse before you feel better. To reduce die-off symptoms, take a fibre supplement such as psyllium seed as well as activated charcoal to bind to the yeast toxins, thus aiding in their elimination.

To reduce the overgrowth of candida the idea is to starve the yeast of simple sugars and feed the good bacteria; therefore the type of diet you eat is of crucial importance. Many health practitioners will suggest that a person suffering from candida overgrowth goes on a strict – even ketogenic – sugar-free and low carb diet. However, ketogenic diets have been shown to sometimes make candida worse: yeast can feed on ketones, which are produced on a ketogenic diet, and some studies show that neutrophils, (white blood cells) are less able to kill candida when ketones are present.

A better diet for someone suffering from candida overgrowth is often a modified low-FODMAP diet, (FODMAPS being Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides, and Polyols, which are basically certain carbs that are poorly broken down, and so ultimately become food for candida). I say “modified” because some high-FODMAP foods have been shown to be beneficial for an anti-candida diet, such as milk kefir, raw honey, and fermented foods. Milk kefir and raw honey have been shown to be helpful for inhibiting candida; plus, raw honey contains multiple different beneficial strains of probiotics, which help rebalance gut bacteria. Sauerkraut has also been found to inhibit candida and fermented vegetables are a great way to get beneficial bacteria flourishing in the gut. However, be aware that some people react poorly to fermented foods so you need to monitor to see if there are any adverse reactions.

Specific species of beneficial bacteria, including *Saccharomyces boulardii*, *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacter*, have all been shown to inhibit overgrowth of candida. *Saccharomyces boulardii* also reduces inflammatory cytokines that are produced when candida has run amok. For the majority of people suffering with candida overgrowth, a period of two to three months on an anti-candida diet should eliminate symptoms. After this time, they should be able to return to a more sustainable yet still healthful, low sugar and relatively low carbohydrate diet. Remember though, while working at reducing candida overgrowth you should also be working on boosting your liver function, digestive health, and immune system. And once candida has been reduced back down to a normal level you must continue to work on rebuilding your gut with good bacteria. Continuing on a high-dose, high-quality probiotic is mandatory, and so is eating resistant starch – cooked and then cooled rice, potatoes, beans and legumes – plus lots of vegetables and fermented foods. Note: Never start taking any supplements before consulting with your doctor, especially if you are currently taking medication or have a health condition. ⓘ



MEET THE EXPERT

Tara Thorne is a registered holistic nutritionist whose practice focuses on helping women heal from hormonal imbalances, specifically as they relate to stress conditions. www.tarathornenutrition.com

Are you at risk?

Symptoms are vague and vary widely from one person to another, so it's imperative to obtain a diagnosis from a qualified health practitioner, to determine whether candida is in fact the problem.

- Fatigue
- Bloating, gas, diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Recurrent bladder infections
- Menstrual irregularities
- Food sensitivities
- Allergies
- Chemical sensitivities
- Depression
- Recurrent vaginal yeast infections
- Oral yeast infections (thrush)
- Brain fog
- Poor concentration or memory
- Sugar or carbohydrate cravings
- Anxiety
- Headaches
- Skin rashes
- Sleep disturbances
- Sinus problems
- Weight gain
- Rectal itching
- Sensitivity to foods, chemicals, or other allergens
- Eczema
- Psoriasis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Toenail fungus
- Irritability
- PMS
- Decreased libido

Prevention is better than cure

To prevent candida getting a foothold in the first place:

- Don't use antibiotics unless absolutely mandatory.
- Don't overeat sweets or alcohol. Women should limit their alcoholic drinks to three per week, men to five per week.
- Eat a moderately low carbohydrate diet with the majority of your carbohydrates coming from vegetables rather than fruit.
- Don't use the Pill. Opt for non-hormone disruptive birth control methods, such as condoms.
- Reduce your stress by any and all means possible. Do not underestimate the impact stress has on the body and the growth of candida.