

# Healthy Hygiene to Prevent Yeast Infections

The organism that causes yeast infections is a fungus, *Candida albicans*, that normally lives in and around your vagina as well as in your digestive tract and on your skin. Much of the time, candida coexists peacefully with the other organisms that live in and on your body. These microorganisms are known as your normal flora. When something upsets the balance of your normal flora, one organism can get out of control, multiply too much, and cause an infection. Conditions that can upset the balance of your normal flora, may include taking antibiotics or birth control pills, some medications, being pregnant, or having an illness. Other yeast infection causes are due to excess irritation or moisture in the vaginal area.

## How Feminine Hygiene Helps Prevent Yeast Infection

Preventing yeast infections begins with taking good care of yourself — getting enough rest, avoiding stress, and eating a healthy diet. If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control. Uncontrolled blood sugar levels can increase your likelihood of yeast infections and may make it harder to get rid of them. If you take antibiotics or birth control pills, ask your doctor if you should take probiotics to protect your “good” bacteria so that yeast won’t overwhelm the vaginal area. In addition, good feminine hygiene helps prevent an environment that’s suitable for yeast growth.

Practice these feminine hygiene tips to help prevent yeast infections:

### 1. Stay clean and dry.

- Avoid cleaning your genital area with soap. Instead, rinse thoroughly with water only and dry completely with a soft towel. If wanted, you may use a mild soap.
- Change out of a wet bathing suit right after swimming.
- Change out of workout clothes and take a shower immediately after exercising.
- Always wipe front to back.



### 2. Reduce natural moisture.

- Wear loose-fitting underwear and pants. Leave some room for air flow.
- Wear absorbent cotton or silk underwear instead of nylon or other synthetic fabrics.

### 3. Avoid using feminine hygiene products that can disrupt the natural bacteria balance.

- Don’t use feminine hygiene sprays, powders, and fragrances.
- Avoid douching.

### 4. Bathe smartly.

- Limit your time soaking in a hot bath.
- Thoroughly rinse after using products like bath salts.
- Stay out of hot tubs.

### 5. Take extra care during menstruation.

- Keep your genital area clean.
- Use pads instead of tampons if you are prone to yeast infections.
- If you use tampons, change them frequently. Avoid scented pads or tampons.



### 6. Practice safe sex.

- Always use condoms if you aren’t in a committed relationship.

If you experience frequent vaginal infections, talk to your doctor about other possible causes.

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Adapted from the handout by By Chris Iliades, MD