

FUNGAL INFECTIONS (MYCOSIS, CANDIDA)

What are fungal infections?

Mycoses are caused by an overgrowth of fungi. The most common vaginal type of infection is candida.

What causes mycoses?

Fungi are naturally present on everybody's skin and mucous membranes and can be transmitted during vaginal or oral sex. Fungal infections can lead to symptoms if they proliferate rapidly and/or in cases of a weakened immune system.

If the natural bacterial environment of the vagina is disrupted, for example through the use of vaginal douches, soaps, sprays, drugs or (cosmetic) surgeries, fungi that cause mycoses can settle. A mycosis can stem from an excess of female sex hormones (resulting from the pill or a pregnancy) as well as from a deficit of hormones (after menopause without hormone replacement therapy).

What are possible symptoms and consequences?

Women:

- › Swelling and redness of the labia
- › Whitish coating of severely inflamed mucous membrane
- › Milky-white, rather viscous flaky discharge with a yeasty odour
- › Strong itching
- › Burning sensation during urination
- › Pain during intercourse

Fungal infestation of the penis is less frequent. It manifests as

- › Strong itching
- › Inflammation of the glans and foreskin

How is mycosis tested for?

Testing for mycosis involves analysis of a mucosal swab.

How is mycosis treated?

Mycosis can be cured with antifungal drugs.

Should sexual partners get treatment as well?

Mycosis needs to be treated only in case of symptoms. Sexual partners should get a medical exam if they experience symptoms themselves.

How can the (re-)infection be prevented?

The following rules apply to women:

- › Soaps and sprays in the vaginal area, as well as vaginal douches, should be avoided. It is best to wash the vagina only externally and only with tepid water (no soap). Tampons and sanitary pads should only be used during menstruation, during which time they should be changed regularly. Cotton underwear is better to use than synthetic underwear (which is not breathable).
- › G-strings and very tight trousers can make things worse and should be avoided.

And for men:

Wash the glans and the area between foreskin daily, but only with water.

The following rules apply to women as well as men:

- › In case of itchiness, stinging or discharge, see a doctor.
- › During treatment, condoms should be used for sex.

