



Candidiasis Basics

APRIL 24, 2024

KEY POINTS

- Candidiasis is a fungal infection caused by an overgrowth of the yeast *Candida*.
- Many types of *Candida* live naturally in parts of the body and only cause symptoms if too much grows (i.e., vaginal yeast infections).
- Invasive candidiasis can occur in hospitalized patients if *Candida* infects the bloodstream (candidemia), organs, or bones.



Overview

Candidiasis is a fungal infection caused by *Candida*, a yeast. Everyone has *Candida* on their skin and in parts of their body (like the mouth, throat, gut, and vagina). *Candida* only causes symptoms and infections if it grows out of control.

Vaginal candidiasis (yeast infections) are one of the most common fungal infections. *Candida* can also overgrow in the mouth or throat (thrush) or in the esophagus (the tube leading from the throat into the gut).

Invasive candidiasis occurs among hospitalized patients when *Candida* infects the internal organs like the kidney or brain or the bloodstream (also called candidemia). The symptoms and severity of infection are very different compared to the more common candidiasis of the vagina, mouth, throat, and esophagus. Generally, healthy people are not at risk for invasive candidiasis.



A petri dish with candidiasis

Types and strains

Many types (species) of *Candida* live on the skin and in parts of the body and normally do not cause any health effects. The most common species that can overgrow and cause candidiasis are: *Candida albicans*, *Candida glabrata*, *Candida parapsilosis*, *Candida tropicalis*, and *Candida krusei*.

Candida auris



Candida auris (*C. auris*) is a species of *Candida* that emerged in 2009 and acts differently from most types of *Candida*. It spreads easily in healthcare settings. It spreads from people onto surfaces and objects where it can live a long time.

Symptoms

Symptoms of candidiasis depend on the part of the body that is infected.

Some examples of types of infection and symptoms include:

- **Vaginal candidiasis (yeast infection)** -vaginal itching, soreness, and discharge.
- **Candidiasis in the mouth and throat (thrush)**- white patches, redness or soreness.
- **Candidiasis in the esophagus** - pain and difficulty swallowing.
- **Invasive candidiasis**- fever and chills are common.
 - Symptoms depend on where the infection spreads such as organs or bloodstream (candidemia).
 - People who get invasive candidiasis are already sick making it hard to determine symptoms.

KEEP READING:

[Symptoms of Candidiasis](#)

Risk factors

A weakened immune system and certain types of medications increases the risk of candidiasis.

Other risk factors can depend on the type of infection. For example, pregnancy and hormonal changes increase the risk of yeast infections. People with HIV/AIDS have a higher risk of getting esophageal candidiasis.

Invasive candidiasis occurs among sick and hospitalized patients and is not a risk for healthy people. Some medical interventions increase the risk for invasive candidiasis and candidemia, include having a central venous catheter, surgery, and chemotherapy.

KEEP READING:

[Risk Factors for Candidiasis](#)

Treatment and recovery

Candidiasis can be treated with different types of antifungal medications. Antifungal medications come in different forms: topical (creams, lozenges, oral rinses), pills, or intravenous solutions (taken through the vein). The type, dose, and length of antifungal treatment depend on the type and severity of infection and underlying health conditions.

KEEP READING:

[Treatment of Candidiasis](#)

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID)