



P.O. Box 95966
Las Vegas, NV 89193-5966
Toll Free: (866) 202-2932
Fax: (702) 269-8267
www.bairnbiologics.com

Candida

Candida albicans is a yeast and a fungus. It exists naturally in small amounts in everyone's intestines. It is also responsible for yeast infections in women.

Overgrowth of *Candida* in the digestive tract or mucous membranes, called candidiasis, was popularized by William Crook, MD in his 1983 book, *The Yeast Connection*. It is also known as candida-related complex, polysystemic candidiasis, and chronic candidiasis. While some doctors dismiss candidiasis as a "fad" diagnosis, an increasing number of doctors and naturopaths are recognizing that *Candida* can be a serious health concern.

What are the symptoms of Candida overgrowth?

Candida is believed to contribute to many troubling and vague health problems including:

- chronic yeast infections, with classic symptoms of itchiness, burning, and abnormal discharge
- digestive symptoms, such as irritable bowel syndrome, gas, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, or heartburn
- respiratory allergies, such as sneezing, congestion and/or wheezing
- food allergies
- chronic fatigue
- nervous system symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, irritability, poor memory and/or poor concentration
- menstrual irregularities, such as severe premenstrual tension and/or irregular menstruation
- skin rashes

It is not clear how many or which symptoms are required to make a diagnosis.

What increases your risk for Candida overgrowth?

- Use of broad-spectrum antibiotics
- Use of oral contraceptives
- Diets rich in yeast-containing foods or refined sugars
- Pregnancy

What are the guidelines for the diet?

Diet is an important part of the *Candida* treatment program. The length of time on the diet will depend on the length of time one has had symptoms, symptom severity, and overall health. Many people notice improvement after strict adherence to the diet for two to four weeks. Once symptoms are gone and lab tests show significant improvement, whole foods from the restricted list can be slowly incorporated back into the diet.

Carbohydrate daily total

Sugar feeds *Candida*, so it is important to minimize the total carbohydrate content of one's diet. During the first 2 to 3 weeks of the program, it is often recommended that carbohydrate intake be restricted to 20 to 60 grams per day, depending on age, activity level, and extent of grain sensitivities. As symptoms disappear, the carbohydrate total can gradually increase. Foods that are low carb include protein foods such as meat, chicken, turkey, shellfish, some nuts, and non-starchy vegetables.

Foods to Eliminate Entirely

- Sugar -- It is best to eliminate all forms of sugar, as it feeds the yeast and encourages its growth. These foods include: white sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, corn syrup, maple sugar, molasses, date sugar, turbinado, raw sugar, demerara, amesake, rice syrup, sorghum. Read labels carefully. The hidden sugars to watch for include: sucrose, fructose, maltose, lactose, glycogen, glucose, mannitol, sorbitol, galactose, monosaccharides, polysaccharides.

- Fruit -- Fruit contain natural sugars that support the growth of yeast. The following foods should be eliminated:
 - Frozen, canned, and dried fruit
 - All canned and frozen fruit juice
 - Oranges and orange juice
 - Melons, especially cantaloupe. These fruit often contain mold.
- Yeast -- Foods that contain yeast should be eliminated. These include: Baker's yeast, Brewer's yeast, Engevita, Torula, and any other nutritional yeast. Baked goods raised with yeast such as breads, rolls, crackers, bagels, pastries, and muffins should also be eliminated. Healthy, yeast-free alternatives may include: Sprouted Essene bread, Lifestream bread, Manna wheat or rye bread, corn tortillas, tacos, rice cakes, rice crackers, Wasa rye crackers, Dimpfelmeier's 100% Plus rye bread, and rice bread. Muffins, biscuits, pancakes, Irish soda bread, chapatis, and other breads made at home using the flour of whole grains that a person is not allergic to and made with baking powder and/or baking soda for leavening.
- Vinegar -- Vinegar is made with a yeast culture. Foods that contain vinegar include: White vinegar, red wine vinegar, apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar, mayonnaise, commercial salad dressing, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, steak sauce, BBQ sauce, shrimp sauce, soy sauce, mustard, pickles, pickled vegetables, green olives, relishes, horseradish, mincemeat, chili sauce.
- Mushrooms -- Mushrooms are fungi. Eliminate all mushrooms.
- Peanuts, Peanut Butter, and Pistachios -- Peanuts, peanut butter, and pistachios often have high mold contamination and should be eliminated.
- Alcohol -- Alcoholic beverages provide sugar that feeds the yeast and stresses other organs such as the liver. Eliminate all forms of alcohol, including red wine, white wine, beer, whiskey, brandy, gin, scotch, any fermented liquor, vodka, rum, and all liqueurs.
- Coffee, Black Tea, Cider, Root beer -- Coffee and black tea create an extra burden for the body's stress-coping mechanisms. Regular coffee, instant coffee, decaffeinated coffee, and all types of black tea (including "fruit flavored" black tea) should be eliminated. Cider, root beer, and other fermented beverages should be eliminated. Healthy alternatives include: water, vegetable broth, fresh vegetable juice, herbal teas.
- Aged, Moldy and Processed Cheeses -- Roquefort and other aged, moldy or blue cheeses should be eliminated. Also eliminate processed cheese such as cheese slices, Velveeta, Cheese Whiz, cream cheese, cheese snacks, and Kraft dinner.
- Processed, Dried, Smoked, and Pickled Meats -- These include products such as smoked salmon, pickled herring, sausages, bacon, hot dogs, pastrami, bologna, sandwich meats, salami, corned beef, pickled tongue, and kolbassa. These products are processed and many contain unhealthy nitrates and nitrites, so they are not recommended for use at any time.
- Packaged, Processed, and Refined Foods -- Canned, bottled, packaged, boxed, and other processed foods usually contain yeast, refined sugar, refined flour, chemicals, preservatives, and coloring. They are not recommended at any time.

Foods to Limit

- Dairy Products -- Candida can impair the body's ability to digest fat, so dairy products may have to be restricted. How much dairy one consumes will also depend on the level of sensitivity to cow's milk and cow's milk products such as cheese, yogurt, buttermilk, and butter. People usually eliminate the following dairy foods:
 - Cow's milk, including whole, skim, 2%, dry powdered milk
 - Most cheeses. Cheeses that are lower in lactose may be tolerated, such as Monterey Jack, Sharp white cheddar, swiss, mozzarella, Colby, provolone, and dry curd cottage cheese.

Organic skim yogurt made with live bacteria may be beneficial for some because of the beneficial bacteria it contains.

Laboratory testing

The Candida Immune Complexes test is considered to be one of the most reliable tests. It costs approximately \$100. Labs that perform this test are Immuno Sciences, Great Smokies Diagnostic Lab, and Antibody Assay Laboratories.



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Candida Overgrowth Symptoms Questionnaire

Patient Name: _____

Date: _____

Please answer the following questions by checking yes or no in the designated box. Your Doctor will discuss the results with you.

	Yes	No
1. Have you taken any antibiotic drugs or proteolytic enzymes in the past 12 months or for a prolonged period of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Have you been bothered by recurrent vaginal, prostate or urinary tract infections?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you feel "sick all over," yet in spite of visits to many physicians, the causes haven't been found?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are you bothered by hormone disturbances, including PMS, menstrual irregularities, sexual dysfunction, low body temperature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are you sensitive to exposure of perfumes, colognes, tobacco smoke and other chemical odors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are you bothered with memory or concentration problems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you taken prolonged courses of prednisone or other steroids; or have you taken "the pill" for more than 3 years?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you crave sugar (chocolate, ice cream, cookies etc...) or carbohydrates (breads, pastas, etc...)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you experience constipation, diarrhea, bloating, gas or abdominal pain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Does your skin itch, tingle or burn; or is it unusually dry; or are you bothered by rashes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you often feel fatigued or "drained"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you suffer from unexplained muscle and joint pain or swelling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Scoring for women: If you answered yes to 3 or more questions, your health problems are probably connected. If you answered yes to 5 or more questions, your health problems are almost certainly connected.

Scoring for men: If you answered yes to 2 or more, your health problems are probably connected. If you answered yes to 4 or more, your health problems are almost certainly connected.