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Vulvovaginal candidiasis

The aim of this leaflet is to introduce the nature, causes and treatment of vulvovaginal candidiasis.

What is vulvovaginal candidiasis?

Vulvovaginal candidiasis is a common inflammation of the vulva and vagina caused by a yeast. Most often, fungal infections are caused by *Candida* species. This yeast belongs to the normal human microflora and is also present on the skin, mouth, gastrointestinal tract and external genitalia of a healthy person.

Candidiasis occurs mostly in women of childbearing age and, conversely, rarely in children and postmenopausal women.

What are the symptoms?

- Itching, swelling, redness, irritation of the vulva and vagina
- Painful sores on the vulva
- Thick flow, mostly white, curd-like
- Painful sexual intercourse
- Pain when urinating

Symptoms can vary, but itching almost always occurs.

What causes the disease?

The vagina is a complex of multibacterial and individual microorganisms that are constantly changing. Candida yeasts are part of the normal reproductive microflora of a healthy woman of childbearing age. When the amount of *Candida* grows too large, symptoms occur. Risk factors include some drugs (antibiotics), stress, menstruation, pregnancy, some chronic diseases (diabetes, immunodeficiency, frequent use of antibiotics). Candidiasis may recur despite previous treatment.

How is the disease diagnosed?

The diagnosis is made based on the patient’s complaints and an examination. Sometimes it is necessary to carry out analyses.

What is the treatment?

Treatment is needed by women who have complaints and characteristic signs of candidiasis. Women without complaints do not need treatment.

Treatment can be oral as well as local (intravaginal candles and tablets, creams).

Fluconazole tablets and clotrimazole vaginal candles are available as non-prescription medicines. Ask your pharmacist for more information.

No follow-up is necessary.

Treatment of the partner(s) is only necessary if they have complaints caused by candidiasis, such as an itchy rash on the penis.

How to prevent?

Repeated candidiasis can be prevented by following hygiene recommendations:

- For washing, odourless, non-irritating intimate washes should be used; deodorant soaps should be avoided.
- Prefer cotton underwear, and at night sleep without underwear.
- When washing the laundry, detergents for sensitive skin should be used. Do not use fabric softeners.
- Use a natural lubricant during painful sexual intercourse.

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