



Nutrition
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RISE ABOVE CANDIDA

Candida albicans is a harmless, naturally occurring yeast that makes itself at home on the skin, in mucous membranes and in the human intestinal tract. People usually live in harmony with this little critter, but when certain conditions are present *Candida* can develop into a fungal form that wreaks havoc on the body. Yeast infections, impaired digestion and skin irritation are all signs that an overgrowth of *Candida* may be present.

While research is inconclusive on the nature and severity of *Candida* overgrowth in our population, practitioners in the complementary and alternative medicine world believe that an overgrowth of *Candida* is a serious health threat and can be managed with nutrition and herbal medicine. Should *Candida* decide to invade your life, there are some common sense steps you can take to improve your overall health and help you to overcome a diagnosis of *Candida* overgrowth.

A GROWING CONCERN?

Feeling yeasty? While yeast infections and thrush are routinely treated by general practitioners, the subject of *Candida* overgrowth still remains controversial in the conventional medicine community. Research on intestinal *Candida* overgrowth is limited but in holistic practice it is a common diagnosis. Dysbiosis, an imbalance of beneficial bacteria, is accepted among holistic practitioners as the most typical cause of *Candida* overgrowth. Taking antibiotics, steroid medications like prednisone, or estrogen can alter the balance of beneficial bacteria in your body, making you susceptible to an overgrowth of *Candida*. Those with weakened immune function and people living with cancer or HIV/AIDS are also at risk as it is thought that a strong immune system can effectively suppress growth of *Candida*. Food allergies or sensitivities may also play a role; talk with your health care provider to rule out any sensitivities.

DON'T TRY AND SWEETEN THE DEAL

Yeast feed on sugar, so one of the first tenets of a diet-based therapy for *Candida* is cutting out refined sugars, dairy and processed grains. Avoid sweeteners and concentrated sugars found in dried fruits and fruit juice. Processed grains include breads, pastas, most crackers and baked goods. The quick digestion of processed grains causes rapid increase in blood sugar levels, which create the ideal environment for yeast. Experiment with new grains such as buckwheat, quinoa and amaranth. All are rich in fibre and won't increase your blood sugar. Diabetics have a higher risk of developing thrush and should carefully manage their blood sugar levels through appropriate use of their medications, a healthy eating plan and frequent blood sugar monitoring.

A Word of Caution

Because of the controversial nature of this condition, little reputable information exists. Many books written on the subject of *Candida* contain misinformation. Avoid the hype by speaking with a trained health professional such as a naturopathic physician if you suspect *Candidiasis*.

This handout is meant for educational purposes only. The information contained is not meant to replace consultation with a Registered Dietitian or qualified health professional.

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Have a nutrition question?

Ask Desiree, the Choices Dietitian at nutrition@choicesmarket.com

PROBIOTICS

Once you reduce the fuel that feeds Candida, you need to bring in the troops! Taking probiotics helps build up the amount of healthy bacteria in your intestinal tract. As the army of beneficial bacteria builds up in your body, it will compete for turf with Candida. Probiotics are found in yogurt and fermented foods such as kombucha and apple cider vinegar. When you're following a strict Candida diet, organic plain yogurt is the only probiotic food recommended. As a preventative measure, probiotics are also thought to reduce inflammation and improve immunity – making them a powerful diet staple. If you are on birth control pills or steroid medication, you should consume probiotic foods regularly. It's important to note that probiotics need to be taken daily as research shows that their effects dwindle over time.

WHAT CAN I EAT?

You can still eat well on a Candida diet, it just takes a little planning. Work with your naturopath or a registered dietitian to ensure you are getting adequate nutrition, which is vital for strengthening the immune system. This is the time to be adventurous with your meals and try new grains, exotic vegetables and play with herbs and spices in the kitchen. For breakfast, try steel cut oats topped with blueberries and have hard boiled egg on the side. Hummus and veggie sticks make a great snack. Or try sliced turkey and apple for the afternoon snack attack. For dinner, whip up a tofu and quinoa stirfry or create a turkey meatloaf using wheat-free flour. Explore websites and healthy cookbooks for new recipes to enjoy.

MOVING FORWARD

Once your body returns to a healthy balance, focus on prevention. Maximize nutrition by committing to a healthy diet that includes whole grains, lean protein and plenty of fruits and vegetables. Avoid processed foods and too many baked goods. They are delivered in a high-calorie package yet contain very little nutrition. The goal is to provide your body with highly nutritious foods that keep your immune system strong and blood sugar levels stable. Be sure to balance meals and snacks with a little healthy fat, fibre and protein to stay energized.

Basic Guidelines for Following a Candida Diet

Foods to AVOID

- Processed grains
- Juice and sweeteners. Also limit your intake of high glycemic fruits and starchy vegetables such as potatoes and squash.
- Wheat and dairy
- Fermented foods such as black tea, soy sauce and vinegars
- Mushrooms, melons and peanuts that have potential for harbouring moulds.
- Caffeine and alcohol

Foods to EAT

- Organic plain yogurt
- Low-sugar fruits like apples, pears and berries
- Unprocessed whole grains like quinoa, amaranth, brown rice, steel cut oats and millet
- Plenty of non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, cucumber, broccoli and bell peppers
- Eggs and lean proteins like fish and poultry
- Plant proteins like beans, tofu, lentils and nut butters
- Flax, Salba, chia and shelled hemp seeds
- Purified Water

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