

## **MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF CANDIDA ALBICANS**

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Overgrowth of the yeast candida albicans has been implicated in a number of health conditions including chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia as well as in those people who seem to have a large number of different symptoms, yet no medical cause can be found. While originally proposed as a systemic yeast infection, most people now feel it is more properly thought of as a colonization of yeast that is part of a larger picture of disordered bacterial balance, especially in the intestinal tract, called dysbiosis. The major causes are poor diet, particularly one high in sugar and processed carbohydrates, and stress combined with exposure to medications like antibiotics, steroids, and birth control pills. In some people, heavy metal exposure, such as mercury from dental fillings, may play a role.

Laboratory testing is now available that, while not foolproof, can help make the diagnosis. One of the best tests is a Stool Microbiology exam, which can be done alone or as part of a Comprehensive Digestive Stool Analysis. A number of labs can do this test, most notably Great Smokies Diagnostics in Asheville, NC, and insurance coverage is sometimes available. Yeast can sometimes be difficult to grow and other tests may be used including blood or saliva antibody tests for candida or a urine organic acids test from labs like Great Smokies, Metametrix or Great Plains. This test looks for compounds produced by the metabolism of yeast and unfriendly bacteria.

Treatment for yeast is best directed at the underlying causes. Foremost among these is diet. Herbal and supplement therapies aimed at decreasing the yeast and promoting healthy bacterial growth are the next most important. Both of these are dealt with in accompanying articles. In severe cases, prescription medications can be used. Some authors recommended a much as 5 months of treatment with nystatin and/or 6 weeks of treatment with stronger, more potentially toxic drugs like Diflucan and Nizoral. These drugs can be toxic to the liver, although using liver supporting supplements can help decrease that risk. With this therapy, there can be an initial worsening of symptoms, especially in the stomach, due to rapid "die-off" of the yeast and release of toxins.