

Important facts about Candida

We hear and read a lot about this mysterious Candida, but what is the truth and what is myth?

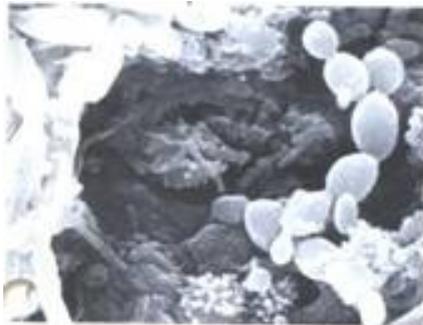
The Intestinal Flora

In our intestines we have about 500 different species of micro-organisms, mostly bacteria. Usually bacteria are thought to be the bad guys, which make us ill, but in fact we need these tiny tenants to keep food bugs and upset stomachs at bay and to produce a number of useful substances for our health. These good guys are called

“The intestinal flora”.



What is Candida?



Candida albicans:
Electro- microscopic photo of normal cells

Fungi also belong to the intestinal flora. These can be yeasts, similar to the ones we know for baking bread or making wine or moulds similar to the tasty ones, which make cheeses. Or they can even be the black stuff, which causes food to ferment and decay. Usually their numbers are small.

Candida is a kind of yeast, a tiny single celled organism, which in normal circumstances is a harmless part of our intestinal flora.

However, sometimes when we are not so fit these Candida yeasts can develop the ability to get nasty, grow into large numbers and cause symptoms.

There is more than just Candida

Candida is a much used general term. Usually it refers to Candida albicans. Yet there are many more species like Candida parapsilosis, or glabrata. Sometimes symptoms can also be caused by moulds like Aspergillus niger or Geotrichum (milk mould). It is essential therefore to know which of these many possibilities is the cause of the problem, and that is why an accurate analysis is needed before treatment should begin.

Typical symptoms of an intestinal Candida overgrowth



Typical intestinal symptoms

When an uncontrolled overgrowth of Candida or other fungi occurs in the intestinal tract, we can get many and sometimes seemingly unrelated symptoms.

The most common is heavy bloating, especially after eating. Diarrhoea or constipation may also be part of the picture; frequently these alternate.

However, different symptoms like nausea and acid regurgitation can also be present, as can extreme tiredness, lethargy, sweet craving, IBS, depression, allergies, recurrent colds, eczema, palpitations, recurrent vaginal thrush, recurrent cystitis and even more.

Why does Candida cause all these symptoms?

Once Candida or other fungi have managed to overgrow our healthy intestinal flora, they usually grow from harmless round cells into filament shapes (a). These develop the ability to cling to our intestinal walls with the help of protein digesting enzymes. They are secreted from one end, which looks a bit like a little head (b). This makes them very persistent.



a)

b)

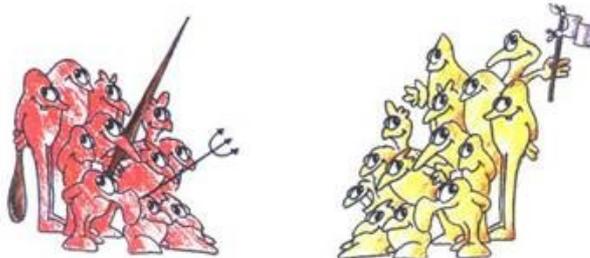
An important part of our immune system is located in our intestines. Here the white blood cells get their training to distinguish bad from good and then they migrate to many other parts of the body to do their work. The fungal overgrowth can irritate this system heavily and may cause the immune system to react allergically to different substances, especially foods. The local irritation can also cause the "tight junctions" between the gut wall cells to become leaky (Leaky Gut Syndrome), so that incompletely digested food molecules can slip into the blood stream and also cause allergic reactions.

In addition to this the fungi give off gas and toxins, especially when they are well fed. The gas results in heavy bloating, especially after a meal rich in carbohydrates, and the toxins stress the liver and nervous system, thus causing the chronic tiredness.

Why do we get Candida?

Usually our own friendly bacteria keep fungi in our intestines at bay.

Just sometimes our little helpers are weakened, for example by treatments with antibiotics, cortisone, hormones, other drugs or too much sugar in our diet, or our immune system is weak for some reason. In this case the fungi can cause symptoms rapidly.



Candida is not always the culprit

Even if you think you clearly recognise your own problems in this description, fungi may not be the cause at all. These symptoms can also be caused by something completely different.

A safe diagnosis is essential; otherwise you could waste money and possibly lose valuable time by "barking up the wrong tree".

The safe diagnosis

Micro-organisms are far too small to be seen by the naked eye and even if they are grown in a dense layer, completely different kinds can look alike. That is why the only safe way to diagnose intestinal Candida is a stool analysis in a specialised microbiological laboratory.

Our diagnoses are done by a German laboratory, which has many years of experience and performs regular research on the subject.



Candida culture bred from a toothbrush

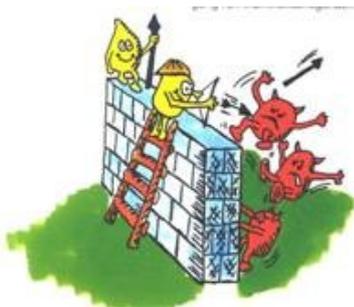
This laboratory will not only identify the exact species of fungus but also investigate if it is a harmless or an invasive kind.

Can a diet kill Candida?

Often the advice is given to treat Candida overgrowth with a strict sugar and carbohydrate free diet. As these fungi live on sugar and carbohydrates the diet will certainly reduce the number of cells but in most cases it can't reverse the fungi's ability to cling to the intestinal walls. So Candida will use its fungal ability to rest when it is starved and start replicating again when its food supply gets better. When conditions are favourable for these fungi, they can switch to protein digestion anyway, leaving us with an impossible dietary challenge.

The treatment

Ever since the first days of your life intestinal bacteria have been colonizing your bowel. Over the years they have become adapted to your nutritional habits and to your intestinal condition – for better and for worse. The treatment, which will be suggested by your therapist, should improve the composition of these gut bacteria and the condition of your intestines. A healthy intestinal flora and a strong gut immune system are the most important allies in our fight against candida.



However, this won't happen within a few days or weeks or by simply taking some pills!

This therapy requires your cooperation and discipline. Your therapist will advise you to take certain supplements, keep an appropriate diet and proper hygiene measures and advise you on anti-relapse precautions.

Only when you combine all of these will you achieve your objectives.

Questionnaire to find out if you are
at risk or have symptoms of an intestinal Candida infection

Filling out this questionnaire can help to diagnose a fungal infection of your intestinal tract. Please understand that not every single symptom is indicating a fungal infection, only one or several symptom might be present and some symptoms can have totally different causes. However by combining all the information a therapist can draw valuable conclusions and decide if a laboratory test is indicated.

	Yes
1. My current problems started aboutmonths/ years ago.	
2. I am often bloated	0
3. My bloating is especially bad after eating sweets	0
4. My stool is	
- regular and of regular consistency	0
- often runny/ diarrhoea	0
- I am often constipated	0
- constipation and diarrhoea alternate	0
5. I have frequent anal itching	0
6. This itching is worse in bed at night	0
7. I have frequent cravings for sweets	0
8. I suffer from skin problems	0
9. I have hunger attacks	0
10. I am very sensitive to alcohol	0
11. I suffer from IBS	0
12. I have food sensitivities or other allergies	0
If yes: which?	
13. Recently I had colds and infections quite often	0
14. Recently I am more tired than usual	0
15. I suffer from the "Winter Blues"	0
16. One or several of my joints are painful	0
17. I take or have taken (in the last two years) one of the following remedies?	
antibiotics	0
any kind of cortisone medication (including sprays)	0
cytostatics (anti-cancer medication)	0
hormones	0
If yes: I took the medication approx. from to	
18. I have/have had frequent cystitis (urinary bladder infection)	0
19. For women: I have/have had frequent vaginal thrush	0
20. For men: Under my foreskin I occasionally discover whitish flakes, some itching and/or some discharge out of the penis	0
21. For children: My child is hyperactive or/and cannot concentrate	0