

Is Yogurt a Safe and Effective Treatment for Yeast Infection?

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Overview

Vaginal yeast infections are caused by an overgrowth of a fungus called *Candida*. *Candida* normally lives inside your body and on your skin without causing any problems. But sometimes *Candida*, commonly called yeast, can multiply and cause an uncomfortable infection.

Most women will get a vaginal yeast infection at some time in their lives. Symptoms include:

- itching
- burning
- thick “cottage cheese” [discharge](#)

Yeast infections aren’t a [sexually transmitted disease \(STD\)](#), so they can happen to women and girls of all ages.

Many yeast infections can be treated at home with over-the-counter (OTC) antifungal creams and suppositories. Increasing resistance to antifungal medications has led many women to seek alternative treatments, like yogurt.

Yogurt may be used to treat a yeast infection by:

- applying yogurt topically to the vulva (the area around the vaginal opening)
- inserting yogurt into the vagina
- consuming yogurt as part of your diet

Some people find that a mixture of yogurt and honey is most effective. Other people take probiotic supplements that contain [lactobacillus](#), the friendly bacteria in many yogurts.

Read on to learn more about yogurt for the treatment of yeast infections.

Yogurt and yeast

Yogurt is a safe and affordable treatment option used by women around the world for the treatment of yeast infections. It works because of a type of bacteria called lactobacillus.

Lactobacillus is a type of “good” bacteria that normally live in your digestive system, urinary tract, and vaginal area without causing problems.

People take lactobacillus by mouth to treat a variety of conditions, including:

- [rotaviral diarrhea](#) in children
- traveler’s diarrhea
- [irritable bowel syndrome](#)
- general digestive problems

Lactobacillus can be found in:

- many, but not all, yogurts
- some other fermented foods
- dietary supplements

What does the research say?

The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database rates the effectiveness of natural products based on scientific evidence according to the following scale:

- effective
- likely effective
- possibly effective
- possibly ineffective
- likely ineffective
- ineffective

Lactobacillus is rated possibly effective for vaginal yeast infections.

A 2012 study found that a mixture of yogurt and honey was actually more effective than an antifungal agent for the treatment of vaginal yeast infections in pregnant women. Participants in this study applied the yogurt and honey mixture vaginally. The clinical cure rate for the yogurt mixture was 87.8 percent. With the antifungal cream, it was 72.3 percent.

Researchers in a 2015 study compared a honey and yogurt mixture to clotrimazole cream and came to the same conclusions as the researchers from the 2012 study.

Shop online for probiotics that contain lactobacillus.

How to use yogurt for a yeast infection

According to the research studies cited above, the best way to use yogurt for the treatment of a yeast infection is to apply it topically or vaginally. Just be sure to use a plain yogurt with no added sweeteners.

To apply yogurt vaginally:

- Take a tampon out of its applicator. Fill the applicator with yogurt, and use it to insert yogurt into your vagina.
- You can also use an old applicator from an antifungal cream. But be sure to wash it first with soap and warm water.
- Freeze the yogurt first. Some people freeze yogurt inside a tampon applicator. Others use the finger of a latex glove. You could even put it in an ice cube tray. It will be cold, but soothing.
- Or you can just use your fingers to get as much into your vagina as you can.

Many people believe that eating yogurt can treat or prevent a yeast infection. This theory is mostly anecdotal, but adding healthy bacteria into your body can’t hurt.

Some people take probiotics that contain lactobacillus. One literature review found that there is promising, but not conclusive, research suggesting that probiotics can help prevent yeast infections in women who get three or more per year.

What type of yogurt should you use?

Not all yogurt is created equal. Check the ingredients to make sure it contains lactobacillus. Make sure to get plain yogurt. Even vanilla yogurt has extra sugar. If you plan on eating the yogurt, go with a low-fat version.

Several of the studies conducted on yogurt for yeast infections involved mixing the yogurt with bee’s honey. Honey has strong antimicrobial properties, which seem to enhance the effects of the yogurt.

Common [yogurt brands that contain lactobacillus](#) include:

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Yogurt for diaper rash

Yeast infections often cause diaper rash in small children. Yeast thrives in warm and moist places, like underneath your baby’s diaper. A *Candida* diaper rash is caused by the same type of bacteria that causes vaginal yeast infections. The topical application of yogurt could be an effective treatment, but there’s no research to back it up.

There are few risks associated with the topical application of yogurt, but talk to your pediatrician before adding dairy to the diet of a child under 12 months old.

How long does it take to work?

Expect to use the yogurt for about seven days. Generally, you’ll want to continue using it until your symptoms have disappeared.

Risks of this treatment

The only risk related to this treatment is that it may not relieve itching as quickly as commercial vaginal creams can. Talk to your doctor if you have a yeast infection that isn’t improving.

When to see a doctor

You can get treatment for a yeast infection from your primary care doctor or gynecologist, or at a women’s health or family planning clinic. The symptoms of a yeast infection are similar to the symptoms of other conditions, including STDs. If you’ve recently had unprotected sex with a partner, especially a new partner, you might want to see your doctor for a pelvic exam.

Note that there are [some physicians](#) that do not agree with the yogurt treatment for vaginal yeast infections, so check with your doctor if you have any doubts. There are different strains of lactobacilli in yogurt, so be sure you read the labels and purchase one that has *lactobacilli acidophilus* strains and no sugar.

Otherwise, make an appointment with your doctor when:

- you get a yeast infection for the first time
- you’re not sure whether you have a yeast infection
- your symptoms don’t improve after using OTC antifungal creams or suppositories
- you develop other symptoms, such as blisters, fever, or foul-smelling discharge

The takeaway

Yogurt may help treat vaginal yeast infections. There are no real risks, and it may be more affordable than some of the OTC antifungal creams.

Give it a try to see if it works for you. If this is your first yeast infection, see your doctor. Also see your doctor if your symptoms are getting worse or not improving after a week.

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