



Health Matters



Great Smokies Medical Center of Asheville

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Back to the Basics: Yeast Related Health Problems

Many physicians who have made the transition from a conventional to an integrative medical practice have done so as a result of having seen a patient who feels “terrible all over” and for whom conventional medical testing can find nothing wrong. “All your tests are normal” can be discouraging words for such a person to hear. Adding insult to injury, patients are apt to be told that their condition is due to “stress.” The doctor who believes that the patient’s symptoms can be caused by something other than a psychological disorder may eventually diagnose candidiasis as a result of his willingness to think outside the box.



Candida albicans is the king pin of yeasts (molds) that affect health. It is an opportunistic organism, preying on cells weakened by frequent courses of

antibiotics or prednisone (cortisone), overexposure to environmental molds, excess alcohol (especially yeast-derived beer and wine), birth control pills, and a diet high in sugar and processed foods. Like other molds, *C. albicans* loves a warm, dark, damp environment, making the colon particularly vulnerable to its overgrowth. *Candida* and other molds are responsible for ailments including athlete’s foot, thrush, chronic sinusitis, jock itch, yeast vaginitis, asthma, allergy, fatigue, numerous gastrointestinal symptoms, toenail fungus, sensitivity to cigarette smoke, and mood disorders, including depression. *Candidiasis* can co-exist with other diseases such as diabetes, autoimmune diseases, and various gastrointestinal ailments. *Candidiasis* can be life threatening to a person with diseases that severely compromise immune function, such as Acquired Immune Deficiency



Syndrome (AIDS); but it more typically compromises the quality of life for its sufferers, who end up with symptoms of fatigue, irritability, brain fog, being run down, difficulty concentrating, bloating, gassiness, constipation, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and achy muscles and joints. The neurological symptoms resulting from candidiasis are likely due to the more than 300 known mycotoxins that are generated and circulate through the bloodstream during the life and, especially, the death of *C. albicans*. *Candidiasis* is diagnosed through a history, physical exam, stool culture, skin allergy testing, and, if there has been a sustained exposure to high levels of *Candida*, elevated *Candida* antibody titers. However, since low levels of *Candida* exist normally in the colon, many doctors don’t recognize that *Candida* is capable of causing disease. See “Treating Yeast-Related Health Problems” on page two for information on the medical treatment of candidiasis.

Probiotics: Beneficial Bacteria and Yeast

Supplemental beneficial bacteria are called *probiotics* for their ability to support life, the opposite of *antibiotics* which are designed to kill bacteria. Unfortunately, antibiotics kill both harmful and beneficial bacteria.

Lactobacillus acidophilus is the most commonly supplemented species of the bacteria genus *Lactobacillus*. It is used to treat health problems, including traveler’s diarrhea and imbalances of healthy bacteria in the colon following antibiotic therapy.

Lactobacillus, as the name suggests, has the ability to ferment milk sugar, lactose, into sour byproducts. These include lactic acid and hydrogen peroxide, which make the intestines and stomach

an undesirable environment for disease-causing bacteria, including *H. Pylori*, the bacteria that causes gastric ulcers.

L.bulgaricus is a *Lactobacillus* species that ferments milk into yogurt. Since it’s not a normal inhabitant of the colon, its benefits disappear quickly when a person stops eating yogurt.

L. plantarum ferments cabbage to give sauerkraut its sour taste. It is normally a beneficial inhabitant of a healthy colon, so its benefits can persist for a long time after you eat sauerkraut. *Lactobacillus* supplementation decreases the incidence of colon cancer, infectious diarrhea, and food allergies. It also lowers cholesterol levels, and activates the immune system to ward off infections.

Bifidobacteria is the most common beneficial bacteria in the large bowel. Eating vegetable fiber, especially from asparagus,



garlic, onion, and artichokes, favors the growth of *Bifidobacteria*. *Saccharomyces boulardii* is related to baker’s yeast and is used to treat acute diarrhea caused by antibiotic use. Rarely, patients with mold allergy may react to it.

A lack of beneficial bacteria is diagnosed through a stool analysis. GSMC carries high quality *Lactobacillus*, *Saccharomyces*, and *Bifidobacteria*, all of which require refrigeration since they are living products.



Dr. Wright: Our Second Brain

Gut feelings, anal retentive personalities, "spilling your guts," feeling "choked up," having diarrhea from anxiety, and having butterflies in the stomach are but a few examples of the everyday expressions and experiences that suggest a relationship between our gut and brain.



New evidence gives credibility to old naturopathic hygiene theories that identify the digestive tract as the source of many chronic illnesses.

Columbia University professor David Gershon, author of The Second Brain, has found scientific evidence to explain the fascinating connection between our digestive tract and brain. Gershon determined that the digestive tract is under control of the Enteric Nervous System (ENS), a largely independent nervous system in the lining of our digestive tract. The ENS is capable of producing neurotransmitters such as mood-determining serotonin and dopamine once thought to be solely produced by brain cells. Gershon states that the complexity of the ENS wiring of

our digestive tract far exceeds that of the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), through the vagus nerve.

This brain and gut connection is a two way street: The brain can make our guts react, and the guts can make our brain react. This explains why drugs prescribed for their effect on the brain often have predictable effects on the digestive tract, and vice versa. For example, antidepressants often result in diarrhea. Narcotics that dull the brain's perception of pain are well-known for their side effect of constipation.

The healthy resting brain has a pattern of 90 minute cycles of slow wave sleep interrupted by Rapid Eye Movement

(REM). The same 90 minute cycles of slow digestive contractions interrupted by episodes of rapid intestinal activity occur in our digestive system during sleep.

What can you do if you have problems with anxiety, depression, or insomnia, as well as gastrointestinal complaints?

Consider having your urinary neurotransmitter levels checked. Treatments that address neurotransmitter imbalances may address health issues with both the brain and the gut. In addition, if you have chronic digestive disturbances, consider getting a stool analysis to diagnose imbalances in normal bowel flora.

Your GSMC physician can recommend natural, nutritional support of a healthy digestive tract.

Treating Yeast-Related Health Problems



The cornerstone of the medical treatment of candidiasis is diet. For a patient suffering from yeast overgrowth, eating sugar is like pouring gasoline on a fire. The patient needs to avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates, including white flour and rice, and to eat foods rich in protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Additionally, many substances are known to be antifungal, including grapefruit seed extract (GSE), caprylic acid, garlic, berberis vulgaris,

and Pao d'Arco tea.

Essential fatty acids and lactobacillus (the friendly, beneficial bacteria in healthy colons) are usually required to restore health.

Prescription antifungal drugs including Diflucan, Nizoral, Sporanox, and Nystatin may also be used. Strict avoidance of sugar is necessary to first reduce the population of yeast to avoid uncomfortable symptoms of toxicity from a Herxheimer reaction or "die off."

Candidiasis doesn't develop overnight, and its treatment similarly must often be sustained for a long period of time.

All content in this newsletter is intended to be informational and is not to be taken as medical advice or to replace medical care.

Employee Longevity

GSMC takes pride in having employees who have been with us for many years. Employee longevity helps us serve you, our patients, more efficiently. At the top of the list is Alice King, who has now been serving GSMC patients for over 15 years this month. The phrase "can't do" is not in her vocabulary. Alice is generous and friendly and is a one-woman potluck. Congratulations, Alice, and thank you for your years of service! How does the track record of the rest of us stack up in comparison? Dr. Wilson and Connie each start their 13th year this month. Art has worked at GSMC for over 11 years and Rosalie for almost ten years. Dr. Wright and Vianne each recently started their seventh year and Denese, her sixth year. Rick will start his fourth year next month; Darlene, Dottie and Cynthia are in their second year; and Jamie is in her first year. Pat recently started her fourth year, but she is quick to tell you it is really her eleventh year as she also worked at GSMC from its inception in 1979 for 7 years. That's over 85 years of experience working for you!

Dr. Wilson: Herxheimer or "Die Off" Reaction

In the 1890s, two dermatologists, Karl Herxheimer and Adolph Jerisch defined a cluster of symptoms that are now known as a Herxheimer or "die off" reaction. Herxheimer symptoms resemble flu symptoms: chills, fever, body aches, headaches, and rashes. They occur as a result of therapies that kill "bugs" such as bacteria, viruses, or yeast. The symptoms usually occur from four to 24 hours after taking a drug or other therapies that kill the "bugs." The symptoms are not side effects of a therapy, per se, but are proof of both the effectiveness of the therapy and the existence of an infection, as it is the toxins that are released from dying organisms that result in Herxheimer



symptoms. The load of toxins can be so great that the body's natural detoxification processes can't keep up with the toxin load.

Natural support of the body's detoxification processes is recommended. Drink plenty of water and get light exercise. Avoid constipation and eat a light diet.

Consider getting lymphatic massage or colonics. Take internal-grade absorbent clay to absorb toxins from the digestive tract, Epsom Salt baths, Vitamin C, and GSMC's Detox Offset, a homeopathic remedy formulated to treat detoxification symptoms. The dose and frequency of the drug or therapy that resulted in Herxheimer symptoms can often be adjusted to slow toxin release so as to not overwhelm the body's detoxification ability.