Yeast live and grow in our mouths, intestines, and vaginas. Yeast infections occur when there’s too much of a certain type of yeast called candida ...

If you have had a vaginal yeast infection in the past and your symptoms are the same, you may be able to treat yourself without first seeing a health care provider. Most vaginal yeast infections can be treated with non-prescription medications.

Symptoms
• Vaginal itching, burning, swelling
• Vaginal discharge (thick white vaginal discharge that may look like cottage cheese and does not have a bad smell)
• May have pain during vaginal sex

Self-care measures
• Purchase a non-prescription medication containing butoconazole, clotrimazole, miconazole, or tioconazole. These are available in the pharmacy at Cornell Health, other pharmacies, grocery stores, and superstores.
• Vaginal yeast medications may be a creams or a vaginal suppository. The package label will tell you how and for how long to use the medication. If you have sensitive skin, avoid shorter (1– or 3– day) treatments, as they can be irritating to the vagina.
• Caution: Vaginal yeast creams can cause latex condoms to break.

When to seek care from a medical provider
• If this is the first time you have had symptoms of a yeast infection (confirm before you treat)
• If you are concerned you may have a sexually transmitted infection (STI)
• If the discharge has a strong or foul odor
• If you have a painful sore in your genital area
• If you have symptoms of a bladder infection (e.g., pain when you urinate, frequent urination, and/or blood in your urine)
• If you have no improvement in your symptoms three days after treatment with your non-prescription medication

To make an appointment at Cornell Health, call 607-255-5155 during business hours, or go to myCornellHealth (from health.cornell.edu) and find a time that works for you.

Preventing future yeast infections
• If menstruating, change tampons, pads and panty liners often. Do not use scented tampons or other menstrual products.
• Do not douche or use vaginal sprays.
• Only wear panty liners when you are menstruating.
• Wear underwear made of breathable fabric with a cotton crotch.
• Keep things loose. Avoid tight jeans, yoga pants, etc. Remove underwear for sleep; wear loose-fitting pajama bottoms or shorts.
• Thoroughly clean any sex toys used for vaginal sex after each use, according to manufacturer guidelines.
• Avoid hot tubs and extra-hot baths. Hot, wet conditions promote yeast growth.
• Stay dry. Change out of wet swimwear or work-out gear promptly and put on dry clothing.
• Avoid taking antibiotics unless absolutely necessary. They can kill the bacteria that help keep in check the abundance of yeast.