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Nutrition Notes – July 2008

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CANDIDA/YEAST...It's A BIG Issue

Candida Albicans / Yeast Syndrome - Friendly Bacteria or Not?

The body has naturally residing, "friendly" intestinal microflora, or bacteria and fungi that inhabit the digestive tract, which support the health of our immune systems and intestinal environment. This friendly microflora of the gut keep unfriendly microflora in check, help digestion, produce vitamins and "natural antibiotics", and eliminate toxins. The common yeast, candida albicans is a fungus that is normally present on the skin and in mucous membranes of the digestive tract and genitourinary tracts. The fungus can also travel through the blood stream and affect the throat, ears, intestines, and heart valves. Candida albicans becomes an infectious agent when there is some change in the body environment that allows it to grow out of control, resulting in intestinal candidiasis or yeast syndrome. If this imbalance is left untreated the symptoms can become chronic, and can compromise the immune system and lead to other serious illnesses.

Symptoms of Candida

Countless factors can and do disturb the delicate balance in our intestinal tract, often decreasing the number of beneficial bacteria while allowing an increase in pathogenic bacteria. Some common symptoms of this imbalance include:

- Severe sugar cravings, including bread and alcohol
- Sensitivity to different odors and/or fragrances
- Overlap with symptoms to many food sensitivity and allergy issues, such as constipation, diarrhea, bloating, etc.
- Lethargy, fatigue
- Urinary tract infections, prostatitis
- Anxiety attacks, irritability, head aches
- Frequent urination or urgency, burning
- Recurrent infections or fluid in ears
- Tinnitus
- And many more

Causes of Candida

- Repeated and/or long-term doses of antibiotics, steroids, and hormones (i.e., cortisone and birth control)
- Significant exposure to mold
- Severe chronic fungal infections

- Consistent intake of a high sugar diet, including refined carbohydrates, alcohol, and bread
- Weakened immune system
- Poor Diet
- Stress
- Medical conditions like Celiac Disease and others

Treatment

There are many foods to avoid that contribute to the growth of candida in order to regain a healthy immune system. The most important item to remove from the diet is sugar and alcohol because it feeds on candida. Identifying and eliminating any known allergies and food sensitivities is the first step in treating candida overgrowth. It is an important, KEY step in preventing the further weakening of the immune system, and healing the gut. Re-introducing friendly bacteria back into your system with probiotics & prebiotics will help adjust the proper balance of friendly bacteria in your system. Adopting a high protein and "good" fat diet is also recommended. An anti-fungal treatment may also be used in conjunction with diet modifications, depending on the severity of the candida problem.

These are some issues to the candida puzzle, which are very complex. It is very important to talk to a qualified health professional such as a Registered Dietitian, who knows how to properly identify and treat this condition.

For more information call Donna Wolf R.D. at Healthy Directions of Poway at 858-335-2140 and visit our website: www.healthydirectionspoway.com.