

Sexual transmission of a yeast infection? ^[1]

Alice,

Recently, my girlfriend had a yeast infection. She went to health services, and they gave her something to clear up the matter. But, the problem now is that I am noticing that my skin is extra dry and sometimes the skin develops signs of breakage. What could be the problem?

— Always Questioning

Answer

Always Questioning,

“The important thing is not to stop questioning.” — Albert Einstein

So, Always Questioning, you’re off to a great start! It’s understandable that you would want to make sure you are healthy and you yourself did not develop a yeast infection. Given the research, it’s unlikely that you have contracted a yeast infection from your girlfriend. But before delving too much deeper, here’s a bit context.

Yeast are microorganisms, in the fungi kingdom. They colonize our digestive tracts and live happily on our skin, and because our immune system keeps them in check, they generally don’t pose a threat to our health. Yeast infections occur when your body can’t keep the population from proliferating. This can happen in your mouth (called oral thrush), on the skin, or in the vulvovaginal (in women) and genital area (for both sexes) due to yeast called *candidiasis* (a.k.a., a yeast infection).

The good news is that this overgrowth of yeast, while unpleasant, is often easily treated with an antifungal and/or anti-itch medication (applied either orally or topically). Yeast infections aren’t considered communicable diseases, and most of the research shows that unless you have a suppressed immune system, it’s very difficult to “catch” one. Even with vigorous sexual contact, it’s difficult to transmit a yeast infection from the vagina to a penis. Also, while there is a lack of evidence to suggest that a yeast infection may be transmitted via vaginal-vaginal sexual contact, there is *some* suggestion that women who perform oral sex on each other, or who share genital sex toys, could cross-infect with candidiasis. For both men and women, some (not all) research

supports the idea that oral-vaginal contact may potentially transmit candidiasis to the recipient of the oral sex (however, this would not likely result in an oral yeast infection). Outside of the genital area, it's unlikely that touching a yeast infection would result in developing one yourself.

Since you mentioned that your skin is very dry [2] and showing signs of breakage, it might be worth making an appointment with a health care provider to have it checked out. There are a number of conditions that include dry, breaking skin as symptoms: from eczema to atopic dermatitis, to changes in your hormonal balance, to irritation from allergens or chemicals.

Hope this information satisfies your yearning for knowledge, at yeast for a short time.

Alice!

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