

Candida overgrowth can cause a wide range of health problems, but these troublemaking fungi respond well to natural treatments.

This news might come as a surprise: Candida is a [normal part of a healthy gut](#). A catchall term for a group of similar fungus strains, candida is actually a peace-loving part of the microbiome. It's when you have *too much* of it in your system that problems crop up — and those problems aren't limited to your intestines.

Symptoms of candida overgrowth include GI distress, yes, but also brain fog, fatigue, mood swings, skin rashes, eczema, itchy ears, unrelenting sugar cravings, and more, [writes Amy Myers, MD](#), a functional-medicine practitioner and author of *The Thyroid Connection*.

Candida overgrowth is common because its lifestyle triggers, including a poor diet, are common. But that doesn't mean you have to live with its frustrating symptoms. These natural strategies can help bring candida back into balance.

1. **Limit sugar.** One of the biggest contributors to candida overgrowth is a high-sugar diet, because candida needs sugar to grow and thrive. That includes alcohol, which the body processes in much the same way as sugar. [Here is some practical advice](#) for kicking your sugar addiction.
2. **Use antibiotics wisely.** Antibiotics will kill many of the bacteria in your body — including the good gut flora that keep candida in check. Check out [these tips](#) to make sure you're taking the right approach to antibiotics.
3. **Consider cutting carbs.** You don't need to do a full ketogenic diet, says functional-medicine practitioner Michael Ruscio, DC, author of [Healthy Gut, Healthy You](#). “But a slightly lower-carb diet means fewer carbs to

feed the fungus.” Vegetarians, whose diets can often be naturally higher in carbohydrates, should pay special attention to their carb intake.

4. **Opt for nonhormonal birth control.** Hormonal contraceptives can cause estrogen dominance in a woman’s body, which can lead to candida overgrowth. Consider a nonhormonal alternative, if possible, and learn more about the health effects of hormonal contraception [here](#).
5. **Avoid candida-fueling foods.** Myers suggests avoiding these foods that feed candida: mushrooms, fermented foods, gluten and other grains, dairy, wine, beer, and fruit juices.
6. **Embrace candida-fighting foods.** Your best bets to restore healthy gut bacteria are to focus on whole foods and to include foods that specifically combat candida overgrowth, such as garlic, cruciferous vegetables, coconut oil, lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, and wild salmon, and spices like ginger, cinnamon, and cloves.
7. **Get a good probiotic.** Research suggests that most probiotics don’t recolonize the gut with new and beneficial bugs. Instead, they help support the community of good bacteria that already live in your gut — and which help keep candida in check. “Probiotics also have strong antibacterial and antifungal effects,” says Ruscio. “In fact, they may work better than some specific antifungal and antiparasitic interventions.”
8. **Develop a self-care routine.** Because stress has a powerful negative influence on gut health, it’s a good idea to prioritize stress reduction, says Ruscio. Get plenty of high-quality sleep, set aside dedicated nonwork time for social activities, and make time for relaxation.

9. **Consider an antifungal medication.** If you adopt these strategies but don't experience a significant change in symptoms, it could be worth trying an antifungal herbal medicine. These formulas can be as powerful as prescription drugs, though, so always consult a trusted healthcare practitioner before starting one.
10. **Let go of what you can't control.** Some factors are beyond our control, says Ruscio. If you were born by cesarean section or if you were formula-fed as an infant, it might be a bit harder to achieve a healthy gut microbiome, but the above strategies can make a big difference. "There are certain things you can change and some you can't," Ruscio says. "It's important not to get overly wrapped up in them. Focus on what you can change."