

Oregano

(Origanum sp.)

By Steven Horne and Paula Perretty

An essential component of Greek and Italian-American cuisines, oregano is native to Europe, the Mediterranean and parts of Asia. It is often found in tomato sauces, fried vegetables and grilled meat, where it has an aromatic, warm and slightly bitter taste. Like other members of the mint family, its aromatic qualities make it useful both as a spice and as a medicinal herb.

The leaves of various species of oregano (*Origanum* genus) have been traditionally used for respiratory and digestive system ailments, and as an antiseptic for fighting infection. These uses date back to the famous Greek physician Hippocrates.

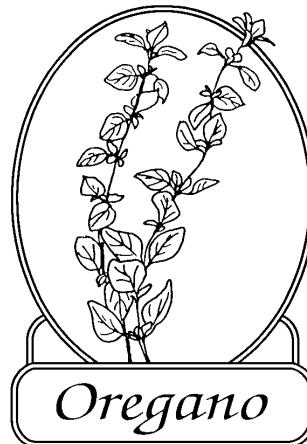
Medicinally, oregano is categorized primarily as an antispasmodic, carminative, diaphoretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, stimulant and stomachic. Traditionally taken in tea form, oregano has been used to treat colds, flu, fevers, indigestion, gas and bloating and painful menstruation. It is also a mild sedative and can be used to promote sleep.

In modern times oregano has come to be used primarily for its antiseptic, antifungal and antiparasitic properties. Most of this activity comes from oregano's volatile oils. Up to 90% of the essential oil is made up of thymol, carvacrol, limonene, pinene, ocimene, caryophyllene and other terpenes that have strong antimicrobial and antiparasitic action.

Because it is both antiseptic and expectorant, oregano is helpful for respiratory infections. This is why it is an important component of NSP's Seasonal Defense Formula.

The most popular modern use of oregano is in fighting yeast and fungal infections. The oil of oregano has been shown to have anti-fungal properties 100 times more potent than caprylic acid against *Candida*, mainly due to the presence of carvacrol.

A study conducted at a University in Turkey measured the antifungal activities of four herbs—sage, wild thyme, oregano and savory—against six mold species. The results showed that sage had weak activity, while wild thyme, oregano and savory were active against all molds tested. All test fungi were completely inhibited by oregano.



A study done at the Department of Plant Physiology in Belgrade also confirmed the antifungal activity of oregano. Researchers compared the antifungal activity of a variety of essential oils against thirteen different fungal species. The essential oil of oregano showing the highest and broadest antifungal activity.

Another study at Michigan State University confirmed the antifungal properties of the carvacrol found in oregano oil against toenail fungus. The Department of Pharmacology at the University of Athens also found carvacrol was effective against six species of gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria, and three species of pathogenic fungi.

The bottom line is that there is ample scientific evidence to back up the use of oregano for yeast and fungal infections as well as bacterial infections. This is why the herb is a major ingredient in NSP's Yeast/Fungal Detox.

NSP also offers the essential oil of Wild Oregano. This is a much more potent medicine than the oregano herb found in your kitchen spice cabinet. The terpenes in oregano oil are hepatotoxic, so the essential oil should be used primarily for topical applications. It can be diluted with a carrier oil and massaged into the skin, diffused for inhalation or used in baths and soaks for treating both bacterial and fungal infections.

Many people use the essential oil internally for yeast and fungal infections. We do not recommend this practice. There are other very good antifungal essential oils that are much safer for internal use, such as thyme and lavender oil.

Pregnant women should avoid the use of oregano oil because it may be a uterine stimulant. Breast-feeding women should also avoid it because it can decrease milk supply.

Selected References

Antifungal properties of some herb decoctions by M. Özcan, N. Boyraz, in Journal European Food Research and Technology.

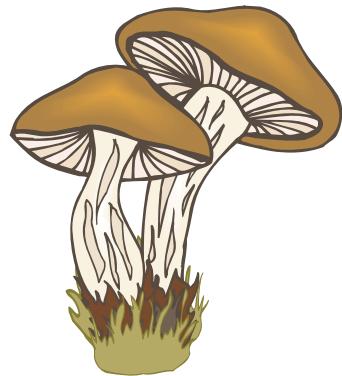
In This Issue

- | | |
|--|-----|
| Oregano by Steven Horne and Paula Perretty | 1 |
| The Fungus Among Us: Yeast and Fungi Aren't | |
| All Bad — In Fact, Most of the Time They're | |
| Quite Helpful by Steven Horne | 2-7 |

The Fungus Among Us

***Yeast and Fungi Aren't All Bad —
In Fact, Most of the Time
They're Quite Helpful***

by Steven H. Horne, RH (AHG)



Yeast are interesting little creatures. If you've ever made bread, dinner rolls or pizza dough from scratch, you probably know a little about yeast. I don't make bread very often, but I do make pizza dough with whole grains. I start the process by adding some yeast to warm water with a little bit of sweetener of some kind (honey for me). Then I add part of the flour to make a soft dough called a sponge.

The little "yeastie beasties" start feeding on the sugar and doing what all microscopic creatures love to do—multiply rapidly. In the process of feeding, they give off lots of carbon dioxide (CO_2) and a small amount of alcohol. This makes lots of tiny "air" bubbles, so when the sponge becomes all bubbly, I add the rest of the flour, salt and oil.

Oil and salt inhibit yeast growth so the process slows down a bit, but the yeast continue to feed at a reduced pace, making the dough rise. Kneading the dough activates the gluten, which makes the dough elastic, so it will hold more air. It also breaks big air bubbles into little ones, creating a finer texture.

Yeastie beasties aren't just useful for making baked goods. They also produce beer, wine and other spirits. I've never done it, but it's something I'd be interested in trying. Since yeast also give off alcohol as they feed, you simply need to leave them long enough in some kind of sugary or starchy liquid (such as grape juice or barley malt water) and they'll convert the sugars to alcohol. By the way, the foam in the beer is created by the same CO_2 that makes bread rise.

If you let the alcohol sit, then acetic acid-producing bacteria will feed off the alcohol and turn it into vinegar. Thus, yeast turns apple cider to hard cider and bacteria turn the hard cider into apple cider vinegar.

Yeast is also used as a food additive and flavoring agent. Yeast products like Vegemite and Marmite are popular in countries like the United Kingdom and Australia. They are made by adding salt to a yeast solution which causes the yeast to break down releasing the protein and other nutrients.

Yeast is very high in nutritional value, by the way, which is why brewer's yeast is a great "superfood." It is one of the

richest naturally-occurring sources of protein and B-complex vitamins. Brewer's yeast is any yeast used in brewing that has been heated to kill the yeast.

Yeasts belong to the class of microbes known as fungi and obviously there are other forms of fungi besides yeast, such as mold and mushrooms. These fungi also have some useful properties.

For example, antibiotics like penicillin were derived from mold. Mold also makes certain cheeses like blue cheese. More specifically, molds from the penicillium genus are responsible for the blue veins in blue cheeses such as Roquefort, Gorgonzola and Stilton.

Mushrooms are another form of useful fungi. Of course, some are edible and some are deadly poisonous, so you have to know what you're doing if you gather mushrooms. However, I really enjoy some good mushrooms. Plus, many very important immune-enhancing herbs are mushrooms or fungi, including ganoderma, reishi, miatake, kombucha and cordyceps.

Fungi and Soil Fertility

But the usefulness of fungi doesn't stop with their role in nutrition. Both fungus and bacteria live in soil and are vital to soil health. There are about one billion bacteria and one million fungi in the average teaspoonful of soil. That fact will probably be enough to incite panic into anyone who suffers from germ phobia, but the fact is that these microbes are vital both to the health of the soil and to the health of our bodies, because they help make soil nutrients available to plants.

Fungi in particular have an important symbiotic relationship with plants. Certain fungi called mycorrhizae (*myco* means fungal and *rhiza* equals root) live partially in the plant root hairs and partially in the soil. The plant supplies food for the fungus and the fungus supplies moisture and nutrients (particularly minerals) to the plant.

A United Nations research project demonstrated that supplying soil with fungi and soil-living bacteria, instead of artificial fertilizers, improved crop yields, boosted harvests, and

saved money for some developing world farmers. (UN News Center-23 March 2006) This is why compost is so good for the garden—it supplies microbe-rich organic matter which improves a plant's ability to utilize nutrients in the soil. Beneficial fungi in the soil are very helpful for breaking down dead plant material to recycle nutrients.

Friendly Flora and Yeast

Just as soil health involves fungi, our health does, too. Our body plays host to about 5,000 species of fungi. These microbes are at worst benign, but more likely are part of the overall ecology of our health, just as the friendly bacteria like acidophilus and bifidophilus are. Our intestines alone house about 2-4 pounds of friendly bacteria and fungi.

In both the soil and in our bodies, fungi and bacteria compete with each other and serve to keep each other in check. Lacto bacteria produce lactic acid, which inhibits fungi. Certain fungi produce antibiotics to inhibit bacteria. As long as balance is maintained, everything is fine.

However, if the immune system becomes compromised, the pH becomes too imbalanced or the friendly bacteria are destroyed, fungi can multiply out of balance, resulting in various yeast or fungal infections. The most common organism involved in these infections is *Candida albicans* or candida for short. (Everyone I know has always pronounced candida “can-DEE-dah,” but I recently learned that the correct pronunciation is “CAN-did-ah.”)

Candida albicans isn't the only species in the candida genus. There are many others, including several that are also normally present in our intestinal flora. Other species in the candida genus that may be involved in yeast infections include *C. tropicalis*, *C. stellatoidea*, *C. glabrata*, *C. krusei* and others. *Cryptococcus neoformans* and *Rhodotorula mucilaginosa* are other non-candida species known to cause yeast infections, but 70% of all yeast infections appear to be caused by species in the candida genus. From what I've read, however, there may be close to 200 species of yeast that could be involved in yeast infections.

Common Beliefs About Yeast Infections

Over the years I've heard all kinds of strange ideas about yeast infections and their treatment. It has always struck me as very strange that people believe that to get yeast infections under control, you have to avoid all fungi, including mushrooms. It's like all fungi get lumped into a single category and labeled “bad.” I remember thinking this when Nature's Sunshine was removing brewer's yeast from some of its products because some people were concerned about it aggravating candida.

I personally think brewer's yeast is a better B-vitamin supplement than the synthesized B vitamins that are used in

most pills. That's because it's a natural food complex, not isolated chemical compounds. The body does better long term with whole foods than it does with isolates.

Here's why I don't think brewer's yeast contributes to yeast infections. One of the most common yeasts used for brewing and bread-making is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Claiming that eating foods containing *S. cerevisiae* is going to contribute to infections with *Candida albicans* is like saying that taking probiotics like *L. acidophilus* is going to contribute to *E. coli* or *H. pylori* infections. It just doesn't add up.

To back up this idea further, *S. boulardii* (a different species in the same genus as *S. cerevisiae*) has actually been used as a probiotic supplement. Studies show it helps reduce symptoms of acute diarrhea in children, travelers, antibiotic users and IBS patients. So, clearly, yeasts, like bacteria can be both harmful and useful.

I also don't understand why all fermented foods and vinegar are supposed to be eliminated on a diet to reduce yeast overgrowth, but for some people it seems to help. The mother in raw apple cider vinegar is a bacteria colony, not a yeast colony. Kombucha, as I understand, is a yeast colony.

Anyway, if you check “vinegar and yeast online” you'll find that there are lots of claims that you can cure yeast infections with white or apple cider vinegar. The claims that vinegar is bad come from the idea that yeast prefer an acid environment and that vinegar is an acid-forming food. My understanding is that naturally fermented foods, like raw apple cider vinegar, actually stimulate digestion which helps balance pH.

The skin and the colon are both naturally slightly acidic. The blood is slightly alkaline. Harsh alkaline soaps make you more prone to skin infections by washing off the acidic environment. Remember that yoghurt is slightly tart (acidic) due to the fact that lactobacteria produce lactic acid which inhibits yeast. Caprylic acid, a fatty acid from coconut oil, also inhibits yeast.

So, not all acids are going to create an environment for yeast over growth. Acetic acid from vinegar may actually be antifungal. However, most vinegar products today aren't naturally fermented. Anyway, while many people feel these foods should be avoided with yeast infections, I find it hard to find any solid evidence that naturally-fermented foods (such as raw apple cider vinegar) should be avoided with candida.

I find it especially odd that people think that you can't eat any mushrooms if you have candida. After all, certain mush-





rooms, like ganoderma, actually help the body combat yeast infections by rebuilding the immune system.

The Yeast Itself Isn't the Problem

When it comes right down to it, the candida organisms themselves are not the real problem in yeast infections. In other words, if you have yeast infections, it isn't because you got infected with *Candida albicans*. Everybody has *C. albicans* in their body because it's a normal part of your body's friendly flora. That's one reason why many medical people have been slow to accept the idea that yeast overgrowth in the intestines is actually a problem. Everybody has some yeast, so how could it be harmful?

So, let's make that absolutely clear again. Yeast and fungal infections aren't *caused* by eating foods containing yeast or fungi, because yeast are always present as part of your friendly flora. What makes the yeast a problem is when the biological terrain of the body gets altered to allow for yeast overgrowth. In other words, when the body becomes weakened and out of balance in certain ways, the yeast multiply out of control and become a problem.

AIDS patients and other people with compromised immune systems get severe yeast infections because their immune system gets knocked down. So, keeping your pH balanced and your

immune system functioning properly is the real key to keeping yeast under control.

Antibiotics and Other Factors That Cause Yeast Overgrowth

So, what are the factors that alter the biological terrain and result in yeast overgrowth? Well, I would have to say that the number one factor is the widespread use of antibiotics.

We've already noted that antibiotics are made from yeasts. The first antibiotic, penicillin, was created from a soil fungus, *Penicillium chrysogenum*. There are many types of antibiotics, and not all are derived from fungus, but any broad spectrum antibiotics (those which kill many types of bacteria) will knock down the friendly intestinal bacteria, allowing yeast to grow uninhibited in the digestive tract. So, the widespread incidence of various types of yeast infections, including vaginal yeast infections, jock itch, athlete's foot, toenail fungus and yeast overgrowth in the intestines is most likely caused by the routine overuse of antibiotics.

Antibiotics are not effective against viral infections such as colds and flu, most ear infections and a number of other conditions for which they are routinely prescribed. Antibiotics are also routinely fed to chickens, turkeys, dairy cows and beef cattle. This causes them to end up in our food supply (especially in dairy products) as well as being taken via prescription. All of this contributes to the development of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria, yeast overgrowth and the depression of natural immune functions.

Of course, antibiotics aren't the only drugs which disrupt the friendly flora of the digestive tract. Sulfa drugs, chemotherapy, birth control pills, corticosteroids, antacids and acid blockers can also contribute to yeast overgrowth. The sulfa drugs and chemotherapy will also knock down friendly bacteria because of their toxic nature. Since the drugs used to treat AIDS are similar to many powerful chemotherapy drugs, I'd guess that the yeast infections are more the fault of the drugs than the AIDS. Steroids, like corticosteroids and birth control pills, will affect the immune system which can allow for opportunistic infections like yeast to get started. Antacids and acid blockers contribute to yeast overgrowth because the hydrochloric acid in the stomach helps control the growth of yeast and other harmful microbes in the digestive tract.

Mercury may also contribute to yeast overgrowth. There are several reasons for this. First, mercury reacts with hydrochloric acid in the stomach to produce antibacterial agents. Mercury also displaces iodine in the body and iodine acts as a natural antifungal (and antibacterial) agent. Finally, mercury depresses the immune system. All of these factors can contribute to the overgrowth of yeast.

Conditions Where Yeast Overgrowth May be a Factor

- Acne
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Athlete's foot
- Brain fog and mental fatigue
- Chronic fatigue
- Chronic gas and bloating
- Chronic respiratory congestion
- Chronic sinus problems
- Food allergies
- Headaches and dizziness
- Itchy ears, jock itch, etc.
- Muscle soreness and pain
- Nail fungus
- Poor immunity
- Skin problems (rashes, etc.)
- Thrush
- Vaginal yeast infections

If you suffer from problems like these and have used antibiotics consider a candida control program.

Diet and Yeast Overgrowth

Dietary factors will help to feed yeast overgrowth. As anyone who has used yeast for baking or brewing understands, yeast feed on sugar. So, excessive sugar and refined carbohydrates in the diet will feed yeast overgrowth. In fact, if you do get yeast infections, one dietary change you have to make is to eliminate all refined carbohydrates from your diet. You will probably even need to eliminate many natural high carbohydrate foods from your diet (such as fruit juice, sugary fruits, and large quantities of starchy foods like grain and potatoes) at least temporarily while you get the yeast under control.

Furthermore, while yeast overgrowth is not caused by eating natural sugars or foods made with yeast, such as bread, wine or beer, foods containing mold such as aged cheeses and so forth, you may need to be cautious about some of these foods, particularly the ones containing mold. This is simply a temporary measure to allow the internal environment to shift in favor of the lactobacillus bacteria. However, I seriously doubt that one has to go to the extreme measures recommended in some books on candida.

Alcohol may contribute to yeast overgrowth only because alcohol is converted to sugars in the body and should be thought of nutritionally as a simple sugar. It contributes to hypoglycemia, which contributes to cravings for sugar and carbohydrates, a bad thing if you're trying to control yeast.

Personally, I think that the approach a person should take to controlling yeast overgrowth with diet is the same dietary approach they should follow for improving general health. One should eat high quality proteins along with ample amounts of non-starchy vegetables as the main part of their diet.

I am quite certain that I had a huge yeast overgrowth problem at one time. As a child I was taken to the doctor every time I got sick and given penicillin (as were many other kids at that time). I developed chronic sinus infections and the doctor put me on daily doses of penicillin for two years. My sinus problems were worse at the end of those two years, not better. By age 19, I was getting sick more and more often and wound up with walking pneumonia.

This story is typical of what happens to people who take a lot of antibiotics. As the friendly flora in the intestines are destroyed, the yeast multiply out of control. They secrete toxins which weaken the immune system and inflame the intestines producing leaky gut. Toxins are absorbed into the body and it becomes more congested, resulting in a host of health problems, such as acne, asthma, chronic sinus infections, frequent colds and flu and many other illnesses.

I was able to recover most of my health before I ever heard of candida. I got off of refined sugar, white flour and other

refined carbohydrates. I did use natural sugars like honey, real maple syrup and fresh fruit, however. I took herbs to build my system and used enemas and herbs for detoxification. My health dramatically improved suggesting that these measures alone helped get the yeast in my body under control, without extreme dietary changes or any antifungal herbs except raw garlic (which I used for infection).

Do You Have Yeast Overgrowth?

I see a lot of people who tell me they have candida because someone muscle tested and told them so or just because they've been told that their problems are caused by yeast. Just because you have a heavy white coating on your tongue does not mean you have yeast. Having a lot of white fibers in your eye doesn't mean you have yeast, either. Also, chronic sinus infections, asthma and skin problems can be caused by factors other than yeast.

I never trust when people tell me they have candida because I find that the role yeast play in *causing* people's health problems is exaggerated. Let me repeat yeast is always present in the body, so just trying to kill the yeast is never going to work. Not only would you be completely incapable of eliminating all candida from your system, you wouldn't want to. It's part

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of the normal flora of your body. So, I see yeast as part of a bigger picture of health problems that involve leaky gut, poor diet and weakened immune systems.

A table showing some of the conditions where yeast overgrowth could be a problem is found on page four. If you suffer from a lot of these problems and have used a lot of antibiotics, birth control pills, steroids, or other drugs which contribute to yeast overgrowth, a yeast/fungal cleansing program may be helpful, but you should definitely work on your overall health, too.

In assessing whether someone may need to take antifungal herbs to control yeast, I look for several key factors. First, is their immune system compromised in some way? That is, do they have frequent colds, chronic sinus problems, or other signs of reduced resistance to disease? If so, have they taken a lot of antibiotics, birth control pills, steroids, etc.? I also try to find out if they have any actual signs of yeast overgrowth such as vaginal yeast infections, jock itch, itchy skin or ears or toenail fungus. If they do, they almost certainly have a problem with yeast overgrowth and some antifungal herbs, as well as dietary changes, will probably be very helpful.

However, even if you aren't sure if a person has yeast overgrowth, it never hurts to urge them to give up refined carbohydrates for a time and put them on some natural antifungal remedies. After all, most antifungal remedies will boost overall immunity and work against bacteria, viruses and perhaps even parasites. This means you have a high probability of improving their health even if yeast isn't the exact cause.

Candida Clear

Nature's Sunshine has a new candida cleansing package, Candida Clear, which I think is a great candida program. This pack contains three anti-fungal agents, Pau D'Acro, Caprylic Acid Combination and Yeast Fungal Detox, which provide a three-pronged attack to put the yeast beast back in its place. Candida Clear also contains packets of Candida Cleanse Enzymes which should be taken between meals to break down dead yeast cells and avoid "cleansing reactions." Here's a little more information about the products in Candida Clear.

Pau D'Arco bark is one of our most valuable antifungal herbs. It not only reduces yeast overgrowth, it also tones intestinal membranes and acts as a "blood purifier" to remove toxins and help clear skin conditions. Besides being part of the Candida Clear pack, pau d'arco is also available in capsules, extract and bulk form. Many people have successfully combatteed yeast infections with pau d'arco alone. When using this herb by itself, one quart of tea or about 8-9 capsules per day is a good dose.

Yeast/Fungal Detox is a blend containing several herbs that reduce yeast overgrowth, including pau d'arco, garlic and oregano and two antifungal compounds, sodium propionate and sorbic acid. It also contains echinacea, selenium and zinc which help to rebuild the immune system. Yeast/Fungal Detox is available as a stand-alone formula, as well as part of the Candida Clear pack. Suggested dose for Yeast/Fungal Detox is 1-2 capsules per day.

Caprylic Acid Combination is the third product in Candida Clear that helps to counteract yeast overgrowth. It contains caprylic acid, a medium chain fatty acid found in coconut oil that is known to have antifungal and immune-enhancing qualities. Caprylic Acid Combination also contains elecampane and black walnut, two herbs known for their ability to combat intestinal parasites. It is also available as a separate product.

One of the problems associated with knocking down excess yeast in the intestinal tract is that their death results in cellular debris that can cause adverse reactions. To counteract this effect (often called a "cleansing reaction") Candida Clear contains a pack of enzymes designed to be taken between meals. These enzymes "digest" the dead yeast and allow them to be destroyed without adverse effects. Without these enzymes, you have to take much lower doses of the anti-fungal products to avoid these die-off reactions.

Silver Shield and Other Remedies for Yeast

With its patented technology for producing a true colloidal silver, Silver Shield is not only a good alternative to antibiotics, it's also a useful remedy for yeast and fungal infections. It can be taken internally along with the Candida Clear program. The Silver Shield Gel can be applied topically for jock itch, toenail fungus and athlete's foot. Silver Shield can also be used as a douche for vaginal yeast infections.

There are some great single herbs, essential oils and other products that are useful for controlling yeast infections. Garlic is still one of my favorites. In fact, freshly crushed raw garlic is still my favorite antibiotic, partly because it works equally well on bacterial, viral and fungal infections (and it's really cheap). It does smell, but that's probably its worst side effect.

Oregano is another great herb for fungal infections. It is an ingredient in yeast/fungal detox, but also works well as a single herb. The essential oil is also a very powerful antifungal agent, but it can be toxic when taken internally. I would avoid it, especially when it works just fine when taken as an herb without the risk of causing damage to your liver.

Speaking of essential oils, they make some of the best antifungal remedies I know. My friend Carl Robinson taught me how to use essential oils to treat thrush when one of my children had it. Here's a basic formula.

2 drops tea tree or cajeput essential oil
 2 drops lavender essential oil
 1 drop thyme essential oil
 1 drop lemon essential oil

Dilute the above mixture in about one teaspoon olive oil. For thrush in infants, you simply give them one drop twice daily for three to seven days. It's easy to administer and it works remarkably fast. My kid's thrush cleared up completely in two days, although I continued the remedy for a few more days to make sure it was under control.

The blend works equally well for adults with yeast infections, only the dose is higher. Use two drops twice daily for seven to fourteen days. You don't need to take it any longer. It works that fast.

Oregano oil is even stronger, so it really surprises me when I hear that people have been taking it for a month or more. If you've been taking an antifungal agent that's that strong for a month and your problem hasn't cleared up, it's probably something other than yeast.

Another herb I really like for fungal infections is usnea. If you've ever been in the Pacific northwest and seen this greyish-green stuff hanging from the trees like hair, that's usnea. It's a powerful antifungal and antimicrobial that also helps the immune system. I get it in tincture form.

Recently, I discovered an herb from New Zealand called horopito, which I've used for really stubborn yeast infections and that seems to work great. It's my alternative to NSP's Yeast/Fungal Detox, when it just doesn't seem to be enough.

Other herbs that are helpful for fungus include black walnut, grapefruit seed, barberry, Oregon grape, spilanthes and purple loofestribe. I also find it helpful to take remedies to rebuild the immune system when someone has had a yeast problem. Echinacea or Immune Stimulator are good. Another great remedy for rebuilding the immune system in chronic yeast infections is a fungi known as ganoderma.

Medicinal Fungi

Mentioning that ganoderma mushrooms are good for yeast infections brings us full circle. Fungi aren't bad guys. In fact, some of our best immune enhancing herbal medicines are fungi like ganoderma, which is pictured on this page.

Take cordyceps for example. It's a fungus that grows on caterpillars that burrow into the soil. Cordyceps can now be grown in vats, like yeast cultures, and has great immune-balancing properties. I find it wonderful for improving resistance to



disease and helping chronic respiratory ailments. It also improves stamina and overall health.

Another great fungi is miatake mushrooms. My good friend, Kalman Markus in Pennsylvania, has taken me hunting these great-tasting mushrooms, which also have incredible immune-enhancing properties. He's noticed that they are most plentiful right before hard winters, suggesting they have the capacity to help the body ward off illness in the cold weather. There's some miatake in Immune Stimulator.

Many grocery stores now carry reishi mushrooms, which are also immune stimulants. Several NSP combinations contain medicinal mushrooms including GlycoEssentials, Immune Stimulator and Chinese Blood Build. I certain don't think avoiding any of these formulas is necessary if you have yeast infections and they may actually be helpful.

And how about that kombucha stuff that many people grow? It's a culture of several yeasts and many people report it really enhances their immune system. It's now available in bottled form at many health food stores. I tried growing it once, but I couldn't stand the taste so I figured it wasn't good for me.

The bottom line is that fungi aren't bad. Many are downright useful. Yes, we can develop yeast overgrowth, but this is not a reason to avoid eating mushrooms or using products made with yeast. Personally, I think that if you change your diet to eat the way you should have been eating in the first place (using natural foods, particularly quality proteins and vegetables, and avoiding all refined carbohydrates). Then use some anti-fungal remedies and follow it up with some probiotics. Unless you have a really bad problem, this should be enough to help you regain your health.

So, instead of cursing the fungus among us, let's rejoice in all these creatures do to benefit our health and well-being. And, next time you eat a slice of bread or have a glass of wine or a bottle of beer, thank the little "yeastie beasties" for their good work!

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