

Understanding Candida

A Practical Guide to Eating Well While You Heal

Prepared for the patients of **Dr. Nicole Maxwell**

Please read first. This handout is for education. It is not a diagnostic tool. Candida symptoms overlap with thyroid disease, anemia, celiac disease, and diabetes, among others — let Dr. Maxwell evaluate you before assuming a cause or starting any protocol. **Tell her if you are pregnant, take insulin or other glucose-lowering medication, or have a history of disordered eating.** Seek prompt care for fever, difficulty swallowing, severe abdominal pain, or symptoms that worsen rather than improve.

What Candida Is

Candida albicans is a yeast that lives naturally in most human bodies — in the mouth, the gut, and the vaginal tract. Its presence is normal. Its **overgrowth** is not.

Candida is **dimorphic**: it takes two forms. In its *yeast form* it is non-invasive and quietly ferments simple carbohydrates. When conditions allow it to reproduce, it shifts into an *invasive fungal form* that produces minute root-like projections called **rhizoids**, which embed into the lining of the intestinal wall.

This is often where symptoms begin. The resulting microscopic perforations are too small for blood to pass into the intestine, but large enough that partially digested food can leak into the bloodstream. The body doesn't recognize that material as food and responds to it as an allergen — which is why new and multiple food sensitivities are so common.

Why Overgrowth Happens

A healthy immune system keeps Candida in check. Overgrowth follows when that control is lost.

Antibiotics eliminate harmful bacteria — but also the *Lactobacillus acidophilus* that holds yeast populations down.

Steroids and steroid-related drugs, including oral contraceptives, cortisone, and prednisone, suppress immune function.

Chronic stress continuously stimulates the adrenal glands, whose steroid hormones further depress immunity and can

lead to adrenal exhaustion.

Disrupted sleep compromises immune response.

Sugar and refined flour alter intestinal pH and feed the yeast directly.

Other recognized factors: pregnancy, hormonal imbalance, unhealthy glucose metabolism, deficiencies in iron, magnesium, vitamin A and B6, smoking, older age, and inflammatory gut conditions such as Crohn's disease.

How It Shows Up

Candida symptoms are diverse and tend to **mimic other conditions** — which is why so many people go years without an answer.

- **Energy & mind** — Fatigue leads the list. Also anxiety, headaches, irritability, dizziness, low mood, poor concentration, memory lapses.
- **Digestive** — Bloating, gas, heartburn, constipation, diarrhea, gastritis, colitis.
- **Genitourinary** — Recurring vaginal, bladder, kidney, or prostate infections; menstrual cramps; decreased libido.
- **Other** — Sweet cravings, joint and muscle aches, skin rashes, sinus or bronchial trouble, chemical and perfume sensitivity.

Bring any of these to your appointment. Diagnosis draws on your history alongside appropriate testing — stool analysis for gastrointestinal involvement, vaginal samples for vulvovaginal candidiasis, and blood culture where systemic infection is suspected.

The Diet

A **high-protein, low-carbohydrate, no-sugar, no-caffeine** approach, emphasizing whole foods and quality protein at every meal to steady blood sugar. Two principles are worth remembering: this is **not one-size-fits-all** — not everyone tolerates every food on the allowed list — and **when in doubt, don't eat it**. Concentrate on what you *can* eat rather than what you can't. Most meats and most vegetables are open to you, which covers the bulk of any main meal.

Target roughly 70 grams of carbohydrate per day

Carbohydrates convert to sugar, and sugar feeds yeast.

✓ FOODS ALLOWED

Vegetables — Asparagus, avocado, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, green & yellow beans, green pepper, legumes, okra, onion, parsley, parsnips, peas, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes, zucchini, beets, carrots, and all greens (beet, collard, kale, lettuce, mustard, spinach, turnip).

Cabbage, turnip, and broccoli help retard Candida growth.

Meats, Poultry, Seafood, Eggs — Beef, chicken, cornish hen, duck, eggs, fish, goose, lamb, pheasant, pork, quail, rabbit, salmon, tuna, turkey, veal; clam, crab, lobster, oyster, shrimp. *No processed or smoked meats.*

Nuts, Seeds, Fats — Almonds, brazil nuts, filberts, macadamias, pecans, walnuts, pumpkin, sesame & sunflower seeds, butter. Cold-pressed oils: almond, avocado, canola, corn, flaxseed, olive, safflower, sesame, soy, sunflower.

Olive oil is especially useful — its oleic acid appears to inhibit the yeast-to-fungal conversion.

Beverages — Water, club soda, herb teas, decaf coffee, tomato juice in moderation, V8 in small quantities, diet soda with no fruit juice or caffeine.

Dairy — use sparingly. Dairy contains lactose, which feeds Candida. Butter is fine. Cream or milk in coffee or tea is fine — never by the glassful.

Whole grains — best avoided, and only hot. High in carbohydrate. If eaten: brown rice, barley, buckwheat, oats, millet, rye, wheat, amaranth, quinoa — well cooked, eaten hot, small portions.

✗ FOODS TO AVOID

Anything sweet — Sugar, honey, molasses, maple syrup, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, dextrose, sorbitol, Splenda.

All fruit and fruit juice, including dried and candied fruit. Yeast thrives on sugars of any form, including the natural fructose in fresh fruit.

Exception: lemon or lime juice — about 1 g carbohydrate per tablespoon.

Yeast & mold sources — Yeast breads and pastries, malt products, vinegar and vinegar-containing foods (ketchup, mustard, commercial mayonnaise, salad dressings, pickles), fermented foods, cured meats.

Dairy to exclude — Buttermilk, cottage cheese, unheated cheeses.

Also avoid — Alcohol, regular coffee and tea, cold cereal (read labels — most contain sugar), crackers, pretzels, peanuts, pistachios, sprouts, sweet potatoes and yams, packaged and processed foods, flour enriched with yeast-derived vitamins.

Check your supplements. B-vitamins, chromium, and selenium are frequently derived from yeast. Look for “**yeast free**” and “**sugar free**” on the label.

Why not yogurt? Yogurt contains beneficial acidophilus — but it is a dairy product carrying lactose and naturally occurring sugars that feed the yeast. You *do* need acidophilus on this program. **Get it in capsule form, not from yogurt.**

The “Cooked and Eaten Hot” Rule Certain otherwise-restricted foods are permitted **only if thoroughly cooked and eaten hot**: leftovers, mushrooms, vinegar-containing foods, well-melted cheese, well-toasted bread. Heat kills the yeast, and eating the food hot prevents airborne yeast from settling on it.

Mold has been known to survive high temperatures. If your case is severe — or you'd rather not guess — skip these entirely. Many people do.

Making It Livable

The diet works only if you can stay on it. These are the adjustments that make the difference between a protocol you abandon in three weeks and one you actually complete.

Rethink breakfast. Grains and fruit first thing spike insulin and set off carbohydrate cravings for the rest of the day. Soup, stir-fry, reheated leftovers, salad, or a vegetable omelet all make excellent morning meals. This is the single change most patients find hardest — and most useful.

Pack lunch hot. Make soup, stew, or chili ahead, heat it until very hot, and carry it in a wide-mouth thermos. It stays hot for hours and keeps you within the program when there's nothing safe to buy nearby.

Snack within your carb budget. A few nuts, celery or other raw vegetables, home-popped popcorn, homemade trail mix, or organic corn chips with sugar-free salsa — small quantities, no preservatives.

Eating out. Choose unbreaded, unbattered grilled meat, chicken, or fish. A baked potato with butter — no sour cream — is the safest side. Salads are fine with your own dressing, or oil and lemon. Ask whether vegetables are canned; most canned vegetables contain sugar. Mexican food generally works if cheese is thoroughly melted and served hot, though watch for sugary salsas. At Chinese restaurants, stick to stir-fried meat and vegetables; skip noodles and white rice.

On desserts. For most people this is the hardest part. Stevia is the best-tolerated sweetener — use pure concentrated powder rather than blends cut with maltodextrin, which taste bitter. Less is more: too much stevia makes food taste bitter, not sweeter. Roughly 1/4 teaspoon sweetens an entire batch of pudding.

Beyond the Plate

Diet is the largest lever, but not the only one. These habits support the same goal.

- **Clean your air conditioner filters regularly.** Yeasts and molds thrive in damp cooling units.
- **Avoid damp basements and root cellars** where you can. Use a dehumidifier, or wear a face mask if you must spend time there.
- **Protect your sleep.** Disrupted sleep compromises immune response directly.
- **Manage stress.** Chronic stress drives adrenal steroid output, which suppresses the immunity that keeps Candida in check.
- **Take acidophilus on an empty stomach** — about one hour before meals or two hours after.
- **Stop smoking, and avoid alcohol.**

Reintroducing foods. Once you're clear, add restricted foods back slowly — a few items at a time — so that any reaction is easy to trace. Afterward, go easy on sweets, especially white sugar, and on yeast-containing foods such as breads, cheeses, and vinegar. Plan reintroduction with Dr. Maxwell rather than on your own.

When to call the office. Contact Dr. Maxwell if symptoms worsen rather than improve after several weeks, if you develop fever or difficulty swallowing, or if you experience severe abdominal pain. Untreated overgrowth can become systemic. Do not wait for a scheduled follow-up if something feels wrong.

Recipes

Nine recipes to start with — breakfast through dessert. All are within the program as written; adjust seasoning freely, but keep the sweeteners and the heat instructions as given.

MOCK PIZZA

1 lb ground beef · 1 can (6 oz) tomato paste · 1 small can tomato sauce · 1 tsp oregano · 1 tsp basil · ½ tsp garlic powder · ½ cup grated mozzarella

Brown the beef in a large pan; drain the grease. Stir in tomato paste, tomato sauce, and spices. Heat very thoroughly. Add cheese and heat until fully melted. **Serve steaming hot** — this level of heat kills any yeast in the tomato paste or cheese.

VEGETABLE OMELET

2 eggs · ¾ cup diced mixed vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, onion) · ¼ cup diced fresh tomato · 2 Tbsp water · butter or oil

Heat butter in an 8-inch pan. Beat eggs and water until thoroughly mixed. Pour into the hot pan and cook until you can flip it. Add vegetables to one half, slide that half onto a plate, and fold the empty side over. Top with fresh tomato.

SIMPLE STIR-FRY

½ lb chicken in 1" cubes · 1 cup each carrots, broccoli, cauliflower · 2 Tbsp oil · 1–2 cloves garlic · 6 sliced almonds · ¼ cup water · 3–4 Tbsp whole wheat flour · 1 sliced tomato · 1 tsp salt

Cut vegetables bite-size. Heat 1 Tbsp oil; add crushed garlic and almonds and stir until just browning. Add chicken and stir-fry about 3 minutes; remove. Add remaining oil, then vegetables — cook until crisp-tender. Return chicken, add water and salt, simmer 1 minute. Stir in flour to absorb moisture. Serve over brown rice, topped with tomato.

HOMEMADE MAYONNAISE

1 egg · 2 Tbsp lemon juice · ½ tsp salt · 1 cup safflower oil · ⅛–¼ tsp each garlic and onion powder

Blend egg, 1 Tbsp lemon juice, and salt. With the blender running, gradually add ½ cup oil. Add the second Tbsp of lemon juice, then the remaining oil together with the spices. Scrape the sides as it thickens.

LEMON & OIL DRESSING

2 Tbsp lemon juice · 6 Tbsp cold-pressed oil · ½–1 small clove garlic

Whisk lemon juice and oil until well combined. Crush the garlic and whisk again until thoroughly mixed. Re-whisk before each use.

HOMEMADE FRENCH FRIES

Potatoes · cold-pressed oil · salt

Commercial fries contain dextrose, so make your own. Cut potatoes into fry shapes. Heat 1–2 inches of oil until hot, then carefully add the potatoes — they will spit. Stir occasionally to keep them from sticking. Cook to golden brown, drain on paper towel, and salt lightly.

The same potatoes, grated, make hash browns or potato pancakes.

GINGER ALE

3½ cups water · 4-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped · 2 Tbsp vanilla flavoring · 3 tsp non-alcoholic lemon flavoring · ½ tsp stevia powder, to taste

Boil the ginger in the water 10 minutes. Strain out the ginger, then stir in vanilla, lemon flavoring, and stevia. Cool and refrigerate as a syrup concentrate — it tastes best after sitting overnight. To serve, add ⅛–¼ cup syrup to 6–8 oz sparkling water or club soda.

VANILLA CUSTARD

2 cups vanilla rice milk or dairy milk · 3 eggs · 10–14 drops stevia extract · 1 tsp vanilla · ⅛ tsp salt · nutmeg

Heat milk and stevia just to boiling; cool 5 minutes. Beat eggs, vanilla, and salt until smooth, then gradually beat in the hot milk. Pour into 5 custard cups, dust with nutmeg, and set in a roasting pan with 1 inch of hot water. Bake uncovered at 325°F for 45–60 minutes, until a knife inserted halfway between center and edge comes out clean. Cool, then refrigerate.

SUGAR-FREE LEMON MERINGUE PIE

CRUST

1/2 cup slivered almonds · 3/4 cup whole wheat flour · 1/8 tsp stevia · 2 Tbsp butter · 2 egg whites · 1/4 tsp almond extract

Toast almonds in a dry skillet. Process with flour, stevia, and butter until the almonds are coarsely chopped. Add egg whites and extract; process to a ball. Press into a 9-inch pie plate, prick with a fork, bake at 375°F for 15 minutes.

FILLING

2 cups rice milk or skim milk · 3 egg yolks · 1/2 tsp stevia · 2 Tbsp lemon juice · 1 Tbsp vanilla · 2 tsp grated lemon rind · 2 Tbsp cornstarch dissolved in 2 Tbsp water

Combine everything except the cornstarch in a double boiler over boiling water; cook 10 minutes, stirring often. Stir in the cornstarch and cook until thickened. Pour into the crust and let stand 15 minutes.

MERINGUE

3 egg whites · 1/4 tsp cream of tartar · 1/8 tsp stevia · 1 tsp vanilla

Beat the whites until frothy, add cream of tartar, and beat to stiff peaks. Beat in stevia and vanilla. Spread over the filling and bake at 425°F for 8–10 minutes, until lightly browned.

Sources. Educational material adapted for patient use from: Blinzler BR. *Candida: Treating it Successfully* (1987, 1997); CandidaRecovery.com, K. Tripp (1996–2026); Designs for Health, *Candida Overgrowth Protocol* (2023).

This handout does not diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Discuss all dietary and supplement changes with Dr. Maxwell before beginning.