What is Candida?
Many common, long-term illnesses that are poorly served by Western Conventional Medicine can be effectively treated by what are currently considered as 'alternative' approaches. Eventually these will become mainstream. I regard my methods as Wholistic, rather than alternative.

Bowel conditions such as Candida problems and Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) rank high on the list of these 'orphan illnesses' and I have developed methods of treating them effectively with a combination of a dietary approach and changes to the air we breathe with respect to its mould content. As a sufferer from allergy to mould, I speak from personal experience as well as having had a conventional medical training and been a GP.

The label given to an individual with bowel symptoms depends largely on who they first consulted. Those who saw their GP, and then had (rightly) very extensive tests to eliminate cancer, (all negative, so there's 'nothing wrong...' but there is) are labelled IBS or Diverticulitis and given pills and bulking agents. They nearly all have a gut Candida overgrowth problem and respond to treatment for this. Others come to me via various...
alternative therapists or have made their own diagnosis of a Candida problem through sensible research. They all have similar symptoms of which the cardinal one is wind and bloating, which implies a gut fermentation problem.

The colon (large intestine) normally contains two and a half pounds weight of microscopic organisms which aid digestion. There should be a balance of species, and if the numbers change in favour of the yeasts, Candida and moulds problems will arise, starting with fermentation and its consequences and absorption of toxins and by-products from this. Yeast, mould and Candida are all tiny members of the Fungi family (neither plants nor animals) and are very extensive in nature. Attempts to reduce their numbers in the gut by diet will be only partially effective unless we also tackle the moulds in the air we breathe. This is commonly neglected, and accounts for the variable nature of symptoms with ‘good and bad days’, which may improve temporarily in hot dry climates. The mould in the air may account for the mood swings and incomplete recovery of some Candida sufferers.

Major improvements in health and wellbeing can be made by attending to the air as well as diet.

Case Studies (Names have been changed)

John aged 28 had been depressed for years and was abused by his alcoholic father in childhood. He had developed a gut Candida and food allergy problem diagnosed by his psychotherapist some months after giving up smoking and caffeine in order to ‘clean up’. He lived in a rented mouldy basement flat, had a busy job and tended to eat junk food. Lately he had been having attacks of wind and bloating, abdominal pain, weight gain, mood swings and diarrhoea, which varied but was disablingly bad in the early morning and prevented her from leaving the house. Five years before seeing me he had had a hysterectomy and several courses of antibiotics for infection; since then her bowel symptoms had gradually increased. She was a keen gardener and her house was full of plants.

Once Jane understood the mechanism of the gut Candida overgrowth, she did the diet and took Acidophilus supplement with good effect. She made some improvements by ridding the house of plants, avoiding grass cutting and sorting out mould problems in the house with heat and dehumidification. She got her energy back and can now safely leave the house at dawn if necessary.

Diet: Guidelines not Guilt Trips

My approach to the diet is a combination of the usual anti-Candida restrictions and measures to reduce the gas, pain and other effects from fermentation, thus reducing the body’s ‘total load’. To this end a simplified version of the Hay Diet (Food Combining) is used. People doing this properly will feel much better in only a few days. Some may have a die-off (Herxheimer) reaction, in which their symptoms worsen before they improve. The diet needs to be adhered to rigidly for a few weeks until improvement is sustained. It can then be used at times of emotional or other stress when symptoms may come back.

Modified Hay Diet (Food Combining)

The mantra is: ‘Don’t eat Carbohydrate (starch) and Protein at the same Meal’. It is non-restrictive in quantity, but the content is organized differently.

Proteins Don’t combine with Carbohydrates

Meat
Fish
Eggs
Cheese

Carbohydrates
Wheat/oats
Potatoes
Bread
Pasta
Rice

The Modified Hay Diet

Do eat

Extra virgin olive oil
Raw garlic, both have anti Candida effects
Yeast-free soda bread. Lemon juice to make salad dressing etc.
Take Acidophilus (lactobacillus) supplement

Unlimited quantities of:

Meat
Fish
Vegetables and salads
Eggs

Emergency Action to Abort an Attack of Mould Allergy/Candida

1. Don’t eat (temporarily) this reduces ‘total load’. Drink water, some people find tea helps;
2. Take an anti-Candida preparation or drug if possible, for a short time;
3. Take pepto-bismol tablets, two four-times daily with medicinal charcoal;
4. Remember all this is only temporary, and will go away...You are not going permanently mad...
5. Use of Nasal Airguard may help; (from ‘Healthy House’);
6. Restart food gradually using anti-Candida diet and food combining;
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in houses is addressed. This includes furnishings and bedding.

I have a fantasy that, one day, we will have a machine that will allow us to see what air looks like. The nearest we have is the horror shown up by a sunbeam at a certain angle, when all the dust is exposed to view. Dust is a mixture containing moulds, pollens and general debris. To continue my fantasy, a sample of outdoor air would contain layers of some of the following substances: the heavier ones nearer the ground: a mist of moulds and dusts, pollens, some chemical pollutants, water vapour and particles of all kinds.

Indoor air would contain many of the outdoor pollutants and mould, but in a lesser concentration, together with any chemicals off-gassed by new carpets and furnishings, a spectrum of indoor moulds, dust, cigarette residue and much else.

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My fantasy includes a way of showing all these substances in a full colour representation of an air sample. It would be alarming, but could provide the impetus for change.

As we have a damp climate, the relative humidity in most houses will be in the 60 per cent range, as measured by a humidity meter. Moulds thrive in this, but are almost non-existent if we drop the humidity to below 35 per cent. This can be done with central heating, dehumidifiers (air dryers) and sensible ventilation. Some people will find this too dry for comfort, but 35-40 per cent relative humidity will reduce the airborne mould count considerably.

The first step in reducing the mould count is to walk round and look for areas of damp or black dots (mould is black; look out - it's often on ceilings and inside dark cupboards.) Areas of visible mould should be tackled with bleach by a non-mould sufferer, and the structural cause sought and remedied. Usually this is leakage or continuous drainage. A humidity meter (Argos) will monitor the situation. Moulds sporulate (breed) in huge numbers in the night so central heating should be programmed to come on in the early morning as it has a drying effect. Air filters clog up easily; moulds which are very small pass through. Filters in dehumidifiers need frequent cleaning.

Airfree (Healthy House or Natural Collection) eliminates moulds by heat rather than filtration and undoubtedly helps.

Bedding and Furnishings

Bedding and furnishings get mouldy with time, so ideally carpets should be avoided. Short pile carpets seem to be better. Mattresses get mouldy and one solution is a water-bed which is made of plastic, and cheap synthetic pillows which can be thrown out.

Common Moulds Causing Allergy

- Penicillium Species;
- Aspergillus Sp;
- Alternaria;
- Cladosporum Herbarum;
- Candida Albicans;
- Yeasts.

Dehumidification

Drying the air discourages moulds. Dehumidifiers (Argos, Amcor) need to be run continuously on maximum setting. When the reservoir fills up, the machine stops so they should be plumbed for continuous drainage. A humidity meter (Argos) will monitor the situation. Moulds sporulate (breed) in huge numbers in the night so central heating should be programmed to come on in the early morning as it has a drying effect. Air filters clog up easily; moulds which are very small pass through. Filters in dehumidifiers need frequent cleaning.

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Emotional Problems

In my practice I record details of upbringing and possible child abuse issues, which are very commonly found in Candida and IBS patients. Undoubtedly an optimistic outlook is important, and from my own and my patients' experience, people do get well and their energy back.

About the Author

Dr Diana Samways MBBS is a conventionally trained doctor (was a GP) .In 1986 she escaped to practise (mainly) Wholistic Environmental and Nutritional Medicine. Her work includes bowel weight and allergy problems, chemical and electrical sensitivities, addiction and the later effects of child abuse. Her book, I'm a Patient... Get me out of Here... Self-help for Common Illnesses publishing in January 2005 will be obtainable by post from the address below. Cost £7.99 plus £2.50 p&p. She can be contacted at: PO Box 52 Haslemere Surrey GU27 1JA Tel: 1428 643021; dsamwaysmd@aol.com