Antifungals

The 3 most common types of antifungal medications used—topicals (which includes creams, sprays and powders), intravaginal suppositories and pills. Most topical creams and intravaginal suppositories are available over-the-counter. The antifungal medications available in pill form, like fluconazole, are prescription.

Over-the-counter antifungal medications are bought most frequently for the treatment of fungal infections of the skin, also called tinea infections, and vaginal yeast infections. There are many brands available for both skin and vaginal infections.

A diaper rash that has become infected with yeast is best treated by the prescription medication Nystatin.

Vaginal yeast infections are treated with either an intravaginal antifungal medication (creams or tablets) or oral antifungal medication. There are several intravaginal creams and tablets on the market, both prescription and non-prescription. The over-the-counter choices are listed below. As you will note, the ingredients are similar and in some cases the same. Both the trade name and the generic drug name are listed.

Over-the-counter medications

- Gyne-Lotrimin 3—clotrimazole vaginal cream 2% or 100 mg per applicator
- Gyne-Lotrimin 3 combination pack—clotrimazole inserts, 200 mg per insert with 1% clotrimazole cream to use on the external areas to control burning and itching
- Mycelex-3—butoconazole nitrate 2% cream
- Mycelex-7—clotrimazole cream 1% with clotrimazole 100 mg inserts
- Femstat-3—butoconazole nitrate cream 2%
- Vagistat-1—tioconazole 6.5% vaginal ointment (single dose treatment intended for recurrent vaginal yeast infections)

1. **How do you choose from the above list?** The active ingredients in these medications are all from the same class of drugs—azole drugs. Therefore, they will all have very similar results. Many women choose one over another depending on whether or not they want a cream or an insert.

2. **What about the new oral antifungal medication taken only once?** This medication is fluconazole, an oral azole drug. This is by prescription only.

3. **When should you not use one of the over-the-counter creams?** If you have pain while urinating, fever, pain in your lower abdomen or back, or a foul-smelling vaginal discharge, you should not treat yourself with an over-the-counter medication. You should contact your physician.

**Fungal infections of the skin** include athlete’s foot, jock itch, and ringworm. Ringworm can occur anywhere on the body. Fungal infections of the scalp are called tinea capitis or ringworm of the scalp, and are treated with the prescription medication griseofulvin. Fungal infections of the skin are treated with creams, powders, and sprays.

For athlete’s foot:
1. Buy Tinactin, Micatin, Lamisil, or Lotrimin cream at a local drug store.
2. Wash your feet and dry them well, especially in between the toes.
3. Apply the cream twice a day.
4. It will take 2-3 weeks to clear.
5. Continue using the cream for another 5 to 7 days.

For jock itch:
1. Buy Tinactin, Micatin, Lamisil, or Lotrimin jock itch cream or powder at a local drug store.
2. Apply twice daily directly on the rash.
3. It will take 4-6 weeks to clear.
4. Continue using the powder or spray for another 5 to 7 days.

For ringworm:
1. Buy Tinactin, Micatin, Lamisil, or Lotrimin cream at a local drug store.
2. Apply the cream to the rash twice a day.
3. It will take 4 weeks to clear.
4. Continue using the cream for another 5 to 7 days.