Candida albicans pathogenicity mechanisms.

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Abstract

The polymorphic fungus Candida albicans is a member of the normal human microbiome. In most individuals, C. albicans resides as a lifelong, harmless commensal. Under certain circumstances, however, C. albicans can cause infections that range from superficial infections of the skin to life-threatening systemic infections. Several factors and activities have been identified which contribute to the pathogenic potential of this fungus. Among them are molecules which mediate adhesion to and invasion into host cells, the secretion of hydrolases, the yeast-to-hypha transition, contact sensing and thigmotropism, biofilm formation, phenotypic switching and a range of fitness attributes. Our understanding of when and how these mechanisms and factors contribute to infection has significantly increased during the last years. In addition, novel virulence mechanisms have recently been discovered. In this review we present an update on our current understanding of the pathogenicity mechanisms of this important human pathogen.

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