

Importance of the *Candida albicans* cell wall during commensalism and infection.

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Abstract

An imbalance of the normal microbial flora, breakage of epithelial barriers or dysfunction of the immune system favour the transition of the human pathogenic yeast *Candida albicans* from a commensal to a pathogen. *C. albicans* has evolved to be adapted as a commensal on mucosal surfaces. As a commensal it has also acquired attributes, which are necessary to avoid or overcome the host defence mechanisms. The human host has also co-evolved to recognize and eliminate potential fungal invaders. Many of the fungal genes that have been the focus of this co-evolutionary process encode cell wall components. In this review, we will discuss the transition from commensalism to pathogenesis, the key players of the fungal cell surface that are important for this transition, the role of the morphology and the mechanisms of host recognition and response.

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