

# Thrush

## What is thrush?

Thrush is a common mouth infection in infants. It is caused by yeast called *Candida albicans*.

*Candida* is often found in babies' mouths without causing any problems. But because their immune systems are still developing, sometimes the amount of yeast can overgrow and lead to an infection.

Thrush is more common after a child has taken antibiotics for some other infection.

## What are the symptoms of thrush?

Thrush looks like whitish-grey patches on the inside of the cheek, the roof of the mouth or on the tongue. Although the patches look like milk, they cannot be rubbed off. Thrush is not usually painful.

Some babies with thrush also develop a yeast diaper infection which looks like red, shiny skin in the folds of leg and buttock skin. There may be tiny red spots scattered over the diaper area, lower stomach and upper thighs. It usually spreads to the entire diaper area.

Breastfed babies and their mothers can have a yeast infection at the same time and pass it to each other. The infection can be in the baby's mouth and on the breast or in the mother's milk ducts in her breast. Women whose breasts are infected with *Candida* can experience:

- red, pink and sensitive nipples,
- shiny or flaky skin on the areola,
- unusual pain during nursing or painful nipples between feedings, and/or

- stabbing pains deep within the breast.

## How is thrush treated?

- Mild thrush usually clears up on its own and without treatment.
- If the thrush doesn't clear up after a few days, see your doctor. They may prescribe an anti-fungal liquid medication.
- The medication is usually taken 4 times a day and continued until 2 days after the infection has cleared up. The medication must touch the areas of thrush to be effective. Proper treatment will help prevent the infection from coming back.
- Always remember to clean bottle nipples and pacifiers carefully in hot water after each use.
- Use breast pads without a plastic barrier. The plastic can encourage the growth of *Candida*.

### Call your doctor if:

- You are breastfeeding. You may need treatment to prevent the infection from passing back and forth between you and your baby.
- Your baby develops painful white lesions inside the mouth.
- Your baby has a yeast diaper rash. Your doctor can prescribe an anti-fungal medication to use in the diaper area.
- Your child is older than 9 months and is getting thrush often.

## Reviewed by the following CPS committees

- Public Education Advisory Committee



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