

# Breastfeeding ... and treating thrush

## What is thrush?

Thrush is a yeast infection. Yeast is found on the skin and in warm, dark, wet places of your body. Some yeast is normal, but sometimes it grows too much. Then it becomes a yeast infection. A yeast infection may be called thrush, candidiasis or moniliasis.

You can get thrush or your baby can get thrush. You and your baby can pass thrush back and forth. You and your baby need to be treated for thrush at the same time.

Thrush can easily come back. You and your baby may get infected again. If this happens, call your doctor and begin treatment as soon as you notice the problem.

## How did my baby or I get thrush?

Some causes of yeast infection are:

- you may have had a yeast infection in your vagina during pregnancy and delivery
  - you may have had cracked nipples
  - you or your baby may have had antibiotics
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## How can I tell if my baby has thrush?

If your baby has thrush he or she may have white patches on the inside of the mouth or on the gums. The patches may look like lace. You cannot rub off these patches.

Your baby may get a diaper rash around his or her bum and in the creases. It will be red and sore. It may look like a burn.

Sometimes there are no symptoms and you cannot tell your baby has thrush. The first sign may be that your nipples are sore.

## How can I tell if I have thrush?

If you get a yeast infection in your vagina you will have a thick white discharge. You will feel itching and burning.

If you get thrush on your nipples, they may start to hurt suddenly. They may look bright pink or red, shiny and irritated. Your nipples may itch. Your nipples will hurt during and between feedings. You may have shooting or burning pains in your breast. You may feel these pains in your back.

## How is thrush treated?

### **Medicines: drops and creams**

If your baby has thrush in his or her mouth, the doctor will order some medicine, usually antifungal drops. Shake the medicine very well. Make sure that the medicine touches all the white patches in your baby's mouth.

If your baby has a thrush diaper rash, the doctor will order an antifungal cream. Put it on every time you change the baby's diaper.

You can use the same cream on your nipples after you feed your baby. Rub a little bit on your nipples after every feeding.

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**Gentian violet**

Sometimes thrush is treated with a purple dye called gentian violet. It comes in two strengths, 0.5% and 1% in a water solution. Paint your nipples twice a day with the dye. Paint the inside of your baby's mouth twice a day with the dye or just breastfeed after putting it on your nipples.

The dye will stain things. Wear clothes that don't matter. Your baby will look like he or she has eaten blueberries. The colour will wear off his or her face in a few days.

Do not use the gentian violet for longer than 3 days. See your doctor or lactation consultant if you and your baby are not better in 3 days.

**Medicine: by mouth**

Sometimes thrush does not clear up. Your doctor may give you or you and your baby some medicine to take by mouth. Take the medicine exactly as directed by the doctor.

**How can I prevent getting thrush?**

Wash your hands often. Wash your hands after you change every diaper and after each time you use the toilet.

Wear cotton bras. Use washable breast pads and change them when they get wet.

Wash your bras, breast pads and nightgowns in soap and hot water. Put a cup of vinegar in the rinse cycle.

Boil anything that goes into your baby's mouth – other than your nipples, for 20 minutes every day. If you give your baby vitamins, boil the dropper. Boil all the parts of your breast pump.

Some people find these things helpful:

- Eating food without yeast or sugar.
  - Taking acidophilus powder or capsules. Your pharmacist can tell you how to take this.
  - Eating yogurt with live acidophilus culture. Eating yogurt can't cure a yeast infection, but eating it every day may lower your chances of getting yeast infections.
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There are many people who can answer questions and help you prevent or treat thrush.



Some choices are:

-  a lactation consultant
-  a public health nurse
-  a La Leche League leader
-  your doctor