

About Thrush/Yeast Infection

Symptoms and Treatment Options

Possible Causes of Yeast or Thrush

Thrush (candida albicans) is an organism that thrives in dark, moist places, such as on the nipples, in the vagina, in the mouth, and in the baby's diaper area. Candida albicans is always present in our bodies, but when the body is out of balance due to illness, pregnancy, antibiotic use, or other reasons, an unhealthy overgrowth of yeast can occur.

Mothers who have received antibiotics for positive group B Strep, C-Sections, bladder infections, etc., may be at higher risk for developing thrush.

Predisposing Factors to Thrush in the Mother

- Nipple damage
- Mastitis treated with antibiotics
- A history of vaginal yeast infections
- Diabetes
- Pregnancy
- Impaired resistance to infection
- Use of corticosteroids, such as for asthma
- Use of estrogen-containing oral contraceptives
- Continuous use of antibiotics for longer than one month, even in the distant past
- Heavy consumption of dairy products, heavily sweetened foods, sweeteners
- Nutritional deficiencies of iron, folic acid, and vitamins A, B, C, and K
- Use of nursing pads, which creates a warm, moist environment

Symptoms of Thrush in the Mom

- Intense nipple pain or deep breast pain that may last throughout nursing, is not improved with better position and latch, and may continue after feeding (may also indicate bacterial ductal infection)
- Sudden onset of nipple or breast pain after a period of comfortable nursing
- Itchy or burning nipples, which may look normal or may appear pink, red, shiny, flaky, or have a rash with blisters
- Traces of white fungus in the folds of the nipple or breast
- Cracked nipples that will not heal, shooting pains in the breast during or after feeding
- Nipple or breast pain while correctly using a hospital-grade electric pump after having shield size and pressure evaluated
- Vaginal yeast infection (monilial)

Predisposing Factors to Thrush in the Baby

- Treatment with antibiotics
- Use of a pacifier
- Prematurity

Symptoms of Thrush in the Baby

- White patches on the baby's gums, cheeks, palate, tonsils, or tongue (if wiped off, they may look red or bleed)
- Diaper rash (maybe simply red or red with raised dots)
- A whitish sheen to the inside of the lips or the saliva
- Baby repeatedly pulling off the breast, making a clicking sound while nursing, or refusing the breast due to sore mouth
- Gassiness and fussiness
- Thrush can sometimes be a contributing factor to slow weight gain

If thrush is diagnosed, both mother and baby will need to be treated simultaneously, even if baby has no visible symptoms.

Treating Thrush/Yeast Infection

Treatment Options for Mom

Goal: To return the proper balance between yeast and the beneficial bacteria that keep the yeast in check.

- Take acidophilus bifidus capsule per day, working up to 3 capsules, 3 times per day
- Take grapefruit seed extract, 250mg three times daily
- Reduce consumption of sugar and dairy products
- Drink more water and add garlic triple strength deodorized tablets 3x daily for 23 weeks or more, Zinc 45mcg, B Vitamins 100mg each.
- Have medical test done to rule out anemia or diabetes (both underlining cause for yeast)

Over the Counter Treatments

Be sure to contact your physician prior to use.

- Gentian violet (stains clothing purple and will make baby's mouth purple)
- Miconazole cream or lotion (2%). Apply to nipples/areola 2-4 times daily for 7 days
- Ketoconazole cream or lotion (2%) Apply to nipples/areola 2-4 times daily at least 2 days after symptoms

Treatments Requiring a Prescription

- Nystatin suspension for infant, nystatin cream for mother
- Fluconazole suspension for infant, fluconazole oral for mother
- All-Purpose Nipple Ointment (APNO)
- Nystatin with Triamcinolone (corticosteroid)

Don't Stop Breastfeeding

- Wash hands carefully and frequently, especially after changing baby's diaper and after using bathroom
- Use paper towels for hand drying instead of hand towel - discard after use
- Wash baby's hands frequently if sucks on fingers or thumb
- Offer short, frequent feedings
- Nurse first on the least sore side (if there is one)
- Use good positioning and latch technique - break seal correctly when taking baby off breast.
- If used, boil pacifier, bottle nipples, or teethingers once a day for 20 minutes to kill yeast. After 1 week of treatment, discard them and buy new ones.
- Boil pump parts that touch milk for 20 minutes daily
- Wash any toys that have been in the baby's mouth in hot soapy water and rinse well
- If breast pads are used, disposable breast pads should be discarded after each feeding - cloth nursing pads should be changed after each feeding and not reused until they've been washed in hot soapy water
- Launder all towels and clothing that come in contact with the yeast in very hot water - if possible, hang washed items in the sun to dry and use a new towel daily
- Wear clean bra daily
- Freezing does not kill yeast but it will deactivate yeast. Attempt to give the baby any milk that has been expressed during thrush outbreak while you and baby are being treated. If that is not possible, boil it to kill any yeast before giving it to baby. Candida usually dies within minutes at a temperature of 122 degrees. For questions regarding stored breastmilk, call Lactation Services at 208-625-5091.

References:

Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple: A Guide for Helping Mothers; Mohrbacher, Nancy 2010
Counseling the Nursing Mother, A Lactation Consultant's Guide: Lauwers, Judith & Swisher, Anna 2005
Ultimate Breastfeeding Book of Answers; Newman, Jack 2000
Core Curriculum for Lactation Consultant Practice, International Lactation Consultant Association; 2007



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