

Thrush

A Guide



Thrush is a fungal infection usually caused by an overgrowth of a microorganism called *Candida albicans*. *Candida* is naturally found on many parts of the body, but can grow out of control. It is usually kept in check by your immune system but certain conditions may lead to overgrowth. *Candida* thrives in moist, wet conditions, breastfeeding mothers are at risk of developing thrush on the breast and nipples. It can also thrive inside the mouth of your baby or cause a diaper rash. Symptoms of thrush should be assessed by your healthcare provider to avoid worsening symptoms.

Symptoms:

- Burning or stabbing pain in the nipple, breast or both. Pain while nursing or pumping.
- Nipple itching, flaking, redness or shininess.

Mother may have recently taken antibiotics

- Mother may have a current or recent vaginal yeast infection.
- Mother may have rashes in moist parts of the body such as the armpits, groin, or feet.
- Baby may have white, pearly saliva or white patches inside the mouth. The white patches may look like leftover milk but will not come off when scraped.
- Baby may have a diaper rash that doesn't heal with normal treatment
- Baby may be fussy, gassy, or uncomfortable while nursing. Baby may refuse the breast, or come off and on the breast frequently.

Important: Pain may be the only sign of thrush. There may be no other visible signs of this condition.

Complementary Alternative Therapies:

Diet Change: More cases of thrush occur during the holidays, and in the summer months. Dietary changes can help control thrush and decrease the inflammatory process in your body. The main food to avoid is sugar, especially processed sugars and carbohydrates. This is especially important if you are prone to regular yeast infections. Eat foods that have beneficial bacteria which are normally present to out compete *Candida*.

Herbs:

Calendula or Marigold flowers can be applied as an anti-infective and healing agent for cracked or inflamed nipples. Apply as a tea in a wet compress or poultice. There are also a number of creams that contain calendula.

Garlic is an immune boosting herb which can help improve your body's defenses against the *Candida* fungus. Some babies do not digest garlic-laced breast milks easily, while others have been shown to like the taste and nurse more. Pay attention to how your baby responds.

Echinacea is an immune boosting herb which can help improve your body's defenses against the *Candida* fungus. This herb makes infection-fighting cells more active. It can be taken in capsules, as a tea, or a tincture

Mix 1 tablespoon of white vinegar or apple cider vinegar into 1 cup of water and wash the nipple after nursing. After washing, let the breasts air dry.

Grapefruit Seed Extract (GSE) can be applied onto the nipple *after nursing*. Dilute 6 drops into an 8 oz glass of water. Some practitioners suggest taking internally first, and if no response then apply externally. Look for GSE in capsule form for taking orally.

Gentian Violet should be used under expert guidance. It is available over the counter but should be diluted properly and not used for more than 1 week.

Useful Links: Dr Newman's protocol on Thrush

<http://www.breastfeedinginc.ca/content.php?pagename=doc-UGV>

Probiotics:

Beneficial microorganisms known as "probiotics" can help control the *Candida* overgrowth. Apply a powdered probiotic directly onto the breast before nursing and into the baby's mouth after nursing. A probiotic with a mixture of Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium is recommended. Adding plain yogurt or cultured/fermented foods to your diet can also help.

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Lifestyle & Nursing:

Since *Candida* thrives in wet, moist environments it is helpful to occasionally air out the breasts. Make sure to wash and air-dry the nipples after breastfeeding if you are concerned about thrush. Limited sun exposure to breast is also therapeutic and useful in conditions like thrush where moisture supports yeast growth. If you have abrasions on your breast do not air it out. Wounds are to be kept moist and only fungal conditions respond to drying.

Make sure to change breast pads after each feeding to avoid infection.

Thrush can be transferred from baby to mother as well as to spouse, family members, other children, and pets. It is important to look for signs of thrush and to treat everyone in the household

In addition, all baby equipment, clothes, nursing pads, should be cleaned with vinegar solution. For laundry, add 1 cup of vinegar (or bleach as directed on bottle) per load.

Important: Follow your practitioner's recommendations and take prescribed medications in *addition* to the suggestions above. Clearly communicate with your practitioner what complementary home remedies you are using. If you do not see improvements in your symptoms within 1-3 days, seek additional help. Symptoms of thrush that do not resolve can indicate other underlying conditions.

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