

Thrush Info Sheet

Candida albicans is the one-celled organism that causes vaginal yeast infections. When *Candida* takes hold in the mouth and on the breasts, it is called thrush. It is a fungus that is normally in a symbiotic relationship with our bodies but can reproduce wildly during times of stress or after using antibiotics. Thrush can be difficult to diagnose as symptoms are variable, and it can show up in one or all of the following places; nipples/breasts, your baby's mouth, or diaper area.

Possible Symptoms in the Baby May Include (any or all of the following):

- white patches inside the baby's mouth, cheeks, or tongue (a white coating on the tongue, or "milk tongue" is normal after nursing. Milk tongue comes and goes and can be wiped away.)
- whitish sheen to the saliva or inside of lips
- your baby seems hungry, but fusses instead of nursing, or repeatedly pulls of the breast during a feeding.
- gassiness and irritability (beyond what feels "normal")
- diaper rash, especially around the anus

Possible Symptoms in Mom May Include (any or all of the following):

- intense nipple or breast pain that lasts throughout the feed, not improved with better latch or positioning.
- sudden onset of nipple/breast pain after the immediate postpartum period.
- nipples that are itchy or burning and appear pink or red, shiny, flaky, and/or have a rash with tiny blisters.
- cracked nipples
- shooting pains in breast during OR after feedings
- vaginal yeast infections
- yeasty odor on breast pad

General Recommendations

These general guidelines may be enough for light cases of thrush. For example, if you see some patches in your baby's mouth, but s/he doesn't seem to be affected by it when nursing, it may be best to let your baby's body find its balance (while trying the following suggestions).

- Cut out refined sugar and processed foods. Yeast loves sugar!
- Good hygiene is one of the best ways to prevent thrush from spreading. Wash your hands every time you go to the bathroom, change your baby's diaper, touch your baby's mouth, or touch your nipples. Also, boil things that go into your baby's mouth as these items can carry yeast and re-infect your baby.
- Wash your bras in hot water (or boil them) and dry in a hot dryer. If there is no metal on your bras, microwaving them can be one way to kill the yeast (bra must be damp, no more than 15 seconds).
- Expose your breasts & baby's bottom to fresh air and sunlight when possible. Yeast loves moist darkness.
- Eat yogurt with active cultures or take probiotic capsules to rebuild your good flora and decrease yeast.

Thrush Remedies

If the above recommendations are not enough, you may want to move on to something stronger.

The following are listed in order of increasing strength.

- Rinse your nipples and "paint" the baby's mouth with a solution of one tablespoon of vinegar OR baking soda diluted in a cup of water after each feeding.
- Paint the thrush with plain yogurt (with live, active cultures) or acidophilus after feedings. You can also paint the baby's mouth with probiotics ("baby-dophilus" is available at health food stores.)
- Nystatin cream (anti-fungal) prescribed by your family practitioner. Use as directed. Diflucan is also sometimes prescribed for mom.
- Gentian Violet is an effective and messy way to kill yeast. Despite its nice name, it is not a "natural" remedy. It is a dye derived from coal tar available over the counter.

Thrush can be persistent. Continue general recommendations and treatment for two weeks after symptoms disappear. (Do not use Gentian Violet for longer than seven days. Follow directions for length of treatment with Nystatin or other prescription anti-fungals.) Be sure to use the full course of prescription treatment if you go that route. This will cut down on the chances of the thrush coming back, and will help in preventing strains of thrush that are resistant to anti-fungal treatment.

Hang in there, this WILL pass!