



Breastfeeding

Yeast (Candida) Concerns

IMPORTANT

· A sign of thrush in the mother is often sudden onset of burning pain during and after the feed.

· In the infant, one may see white patches on the tongue, cheeks or gums that do not wipe off.

· See your health care professional for treatment recommendations.

· Treatment usually takes 2 weeks.

What is thrush?

- Yeast is a common fungal infection that occurs in babies' mouths (thrush) and can also cause diaper rash in infants.
- Yeast can also cause severe nipple and breast pain in the mother, which may interfere with breastfeeding.
- Almost all humans are colonized with yeast, yet it rarely causes a problem until there is an overgrowth of the organism.

Possible signs and symptoms in the mother:

- sudden onset of sore nipples
- cracked or sore nipples that don't heal
- shiny, flaky, itchy, red or burning nipples; the areola can be affected also
- traces of white fungus in the folds of the nipple
- deep shooting or burning pain in the breast during and after feeds
- may be accompanied by a vaginal yeast infection
- possibly no symptoms though the mother will still have the infection on her nipples if the baby has oral thrush.

Possible signs and symptoms in the baby:

- diaper rash that does not improve after using diaper cream for 2 to 3 days
- fussy at the breast or refusing the breast; excess gas
- white patches on the inside of the mouth, cheeks or tongue that do not wipe off with a cloth
- possibly no symptoms

Treatment:

- It is important that your doctor treat both you and your baby at the same time.
- It is important to finish all of the medication according to your doctor's directions.
- Common treatments can include Gentian Violet, Kenacomb or All Purpose Nipple Ointment, Fluconazole or Clotrimazole.

- Treatment usually takes 2 weeks.
- Thrush may come back if treatment is stopped too soon.

What you can do:

- Continue breastfeeding.
- Wash your hands often, especially after changing baby's diaper & after using the bathroom.
- Single use towels may be helpful.
- Rinse nipples with clean water and air dry after each feeding; change breast pads frequently.
- If possible, expose nipples to sunshine or a heat lamp for 3 minutes twice a day.
- Treat anything that comes into contact with the baby's mouth or mom's breast (for example, pacifier, bottle nipples, teething toys, breast pump parts, bras, breast pads). Treatment includes soaking articles in a vinegar and water solution for 30 minutes (1 part vinegar to 4 parts water) OR boiling articles for 20 minutes OR sterilizing pump parts in microwaveable bags sold for pumps.
- After one week of treatment throw pacifiers and bottle nipples out and use new ones.
- Throw out disposable nursing pads when they become wet. If using cloth pads, change them after every feeding and wash in hot, soapy water.
- It is not clear in the literature whether expressed breast milk of a mother with a yeast overgrowth can be saved and frozen for later use without reinfesting the mother and baby. Freezing deactivates yeast but does not kill it. It is generally advised not to express and freeze milk until there has been one completed course of medication and the mother and baby are symptom free. If a mother has a large supply of stored breast milk, and both mother and baby are symptomatic, home pasteurization of stored milk may be considered.
- If thrush continues to recur, all member of the family may need to be treated.
- Some parents may try acidophilus three times a day orally (40 million to 1 billion units) for 2 weeks beyond when symptoms disappear.
- Once treatment has begun, symptoms may begin to resolve within 24-28 hours but may take up to a week or longer to improve.

Adapted with permission from:
Breastfeeding Committee for Saskatchewan
Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region