

# Thrush



Thrush is a very common vaginal infection, caused by an overgrowth of yeasts that normally live in the bowel and may be present in other parts of the body, such as the mouth, skin and vagina.

The most common cause of thrush is *Candida albicans*, but other types of yeast sometimes are involved.

Small amounts of *Candida* are usually present in all people and does not cause symptoms, but sometimes overgrowth of *Candida* occurs and symptoms develop. Some people with vaginas may be more sensitive than others to the presence of *Candida* and can develop symptoms even when only small amounts of yeast are present.

Circumstances that encourage the overgrowth of *Candida albicans* include:

- > hormonal changes (for example pregnancy)
- > medication side-effects, especially antibiotics and steroids
- > medical conditions such as diabetes mellitus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection
- > immune suppression
- > some cancers and their treatment.

## How thrush is spread

Thrush is not considered to be a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The yeasts that cause thrush may be present all the time. It is changes in the person's body that allow the condition to develop.

## Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of thrush include:

- > vaginal itch, discomfort or irritation
- > vaginal discharge
- > redness and/or swelling of the vagina or vulva
- > stinging or burning when passing urine.

Other conditions, such as genital herpes or urinary tract infection may have similar symptoms, so it is important to have the diagnosis confirmed.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis of thrush is usually made following examination of the affected area by a doctor. Sometimes the doctor will take a swab to send to the laboratory for testing to confirm a diagnosis of thrush.

## Incubation period

*(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)*

The yeasts that cause thrush may be present all the time. It is changes in the person's body that allow the condition to develop.

## Infectious period

*(time during which an infected person can infect others)*

Person-to-person spread does not usually occur.

## Treatment

Effective treatments with vaginal creams and vaginal tablets are available.

Patients with frequently recurring thrush should seek medical advice to make sure they do not have a medical condition such as diabetes mellitus. A longer course of treatment with oral tablets may be required.

There is no evidence that dietary changes help prevent thrush.

## Prevention

- > Sexual partners of people with thrush do not require treatment, except very occasionally when recurrent infections occur.
- > Wipe from front to back after using the toilet, to avoid spreading yeast from the anus to the vagina.

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## You've Got What? Thrush

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