



## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

### Thrush

#### Topic Overview

#### What is thrush?

Thrush is a yeast infection that causes white patches in the mouth and on the tongue. Thrush is most common in babies and older adults, but it can occur at any age.

#### What causes thrush?

You get [thrush](#) when a yeast called candida, normally found on the body, grows out of control.

In babies, candida causes thrush because babies' [immune systems](#) are not yet strong enough to control the growth of the yeast. Older people get thrush because their immune systems can weaken with age.

Some people get thrush when they take certain medicines, such as [antibiotics](#) or [inhaled corticosteroids](#). People who have health problems, such as [diabetes](#) or [HIV](#), are also more likely to get thrush.

#### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of thrush are white patches that stick to the inside of the mouth and tongue. See a picture of [thrush](#) .

In babies, it is easy to mistake thrush for milk or formula. It looks like cottage cheese or milk curds. Don't try to wipe away these patches, because you can make them red and sore. Some babies can be cranky and do not want to eat.

#### How is thrush diagnosed?

In most cases, doctors can diagnose thrush just by looking at the white patches. Your doctor will also ask you questions about your health. If your doctor thinks that a health problem, such as diabetes, may be causing thrush, you may also be tested for that condition.

#### How is it treated?

Thrush in babies is usually not serious, and you can treat it with antifungal medicine such as nystatin liquid. In most cases, you will put the medicine directly on the white patches. When a baby has thrush, the yeast can cause a diaper rash at the same time as thrush. Your baby may need nystatin cream or ointment for his or her diaper area.

To treat thrush in adults, at first you will probably use medicine that goes directly on the white patches, such as a liquid or a lozenge. If these medicines don't work, your doctor may prescribe an antifungal pill.

## How can you manage thrush?

If your baby has thrush, it may help to:

- Clean bottle nipples and pacifiers regularly using hot water.
- Clean your nipples with medicine, such as nystatin, if you breast-feed your baby. Breast-feeding mothers and babies can pass a yeast infection back and forth.
- Dry your nipples and apply lanolin lotion after breast-feeding.

If you wear dentures and have thrush, be sure to clean your mouth and dentures every night. You can soak them overnight in a denture cleaner that you buy at the store. Rinse your dentures well after soaking them.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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