

## Thrush Infection in Breast-feeding Mother and Infant

**T**hrush is another name for a yeast infection. The most important preventive measure is good handwashing. You need to remember to wash your hands before you handle your breasts for any reason.

Some signs of thrush for mothers:

- Red nipples or areola.
- Itchy nipples or shiny, peeling skin.
- Sore nipples that don't respond to basic treatment.
- Nipples that remain sore throughout the feeding (for no apparent reason).
- Burning or shooting pain in the breast during or after a feeding.
- Repeated breast infections.
- Cracked nipples that do not heal.
- History of repeated vaginal yeast infections.

Some signs of thrush for babies:

- Baby has white spots in mouth or white tongue.
- Diaper rash.
- Baby is gassy and cranky.
- Baby repeatedly pulls off the breast.
- Inside of baby's lips have a mother-of-pearl look.

Both you and your baby must be treated at the same time so that you don't reinfect each other.

Treatment for mom:

1. Call your care provider for medicine for your nipples. Often, nystatin is prescribed in a cream form. You may be instructed to use Lotrimin or gentian violet.
2. After each breast-feeding, rinse your nipples with a solution of one table-spoon vinegar in one cup of water. Allow your nipples to air-dry.
3. Apply a small amount of the nystatin to your nipples, areola, and any part of your breast that comes in contact with your baby's lips. Do this after each breast-feeding until 2 weeks after all signs of thrush are gone. You do not need to wipe ointment off before feeding your baby.
4. Sunbathe your breasts if you can for about 10 minutes twice daily (don't get sunburned).
5. Avoid foods which cause yeast to grow:
  - Sugar (including artificial sweeteners)
  - Yeast breads

- Fermented foods (wine, beer, vinegar)
  - Milk, dairy products
  - Peanuts, peanut butter
  - Grapes, melons, dried fruits
  - Mushrooms
6. Take supplements which prevent the growth of yeast:
    - B-complex vitamins
    - Garlic (especially raw if you can)
  7. It is best not to use breast pads. If you do use them, replace them as soon as they get wet.
  8. If you are pumping your milk, feed it to your baby the same day. Don't save the milk or you may reinfect your baby at a later time. Freezing does NOT kill yeast. Throw away previously stored milk.
  9. Boil items that come into contact with your breast (breast shells, pump parts) for 20 minutes every day.
  10. Use chlorine bleach to wash bras, cloth nursing pads and baby's diapers. Double-rinse them. Wash bras daily.
  11. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after nursing. Also wash them after putting medicine on your nipples and areolae.

#### Treatment for baby:

1. Call baby's care provider for medicine. Often, nystatin is prescribed in an oral suspension. There are also many new therapies that are being used now.
2. Put the measured amount of nystatin in a paper cup. Apply the medicine with a Q-tip or your finger. Do not use the medicine dropper that comes with the medication. You could contaminate the medicine. Apply the medicine to all surfaces of the mouth after every feeding. Have your baby drink what is left in the cup.
3. Boil things used in your baby's mouth (pacifiers, teething toys, bottle nipples) for 20 minutes each day. Keep your older children's toys away from the baby.
4. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after putting medicine in your baby's mouth. Also wash them after diaper changes.

#### Other important information:

Thrush infection passes easily to other people, especially family members.

Be sure everyone washes their hands before and after handling the baby, his or her toys or clothes, or anything that comes in contact with your baby's mouth, the milk, or your breasts.



If you have any questions,  
call your doctor  
or your baby's doctor.