
◆ VAGINAL CANDIDA INFECTION..... THRUSH ◆

Thrush is a very common vaginal infection, which is caused by a yeast organism (Candida Albicans most commonly, but sometimes other Candida species). This yeast normally lives in and around our bodies and is in balance with the other bacteria that we carry around. If the yeast gets an opportunity to overgrow, then it can cause problems.

Approximately 3 in every 4 women will suffer from a thrush infection at some time in their lives, and many will have more than one episode.

● Risks for thrush

- ▶ antibiotic treatment
- ▶ pregnancy
- ▶ being on the oral contraceptive pill
- ▶ diabetes
- ▶ obesity
- ▶ immune system problems and being generally unwell

● Symptoms

Women with thrush can experience:

- ▶ vaginal itch and irritation, and possibly pain with sex
- ▶ a white, thick discharge which may look like cottage cheese
- ▶ redness and sometimes swelling in and around the vagina
- ▶ stinging or burning when passing urine

Thrush is not the only cause for these symptoms, so you may wish to have a consultation with a doctor before starting any treatment.

● Diagnosis

As medication for thrush does not require a prescription, many women will organise their own treatment. If a woman sees a doctor for suspected thrush, a vaginal examination is performed to confirm the diagnosis and exclude other causes for the symptoms, and swabs will usually be sent for testing. A urine test may also be sent, if there is pain and burning with passing urine.

● Treatment options

- ▶ vaginal creams- Clotrimazole (Canesten®), Butoconazole (Gynazole-1®), Miconazole (Resolve Thrush®), Nystatin (Nilstat Vaginal®)
- ▶ vaginal tablets (pessaries)- Clotrimazole (Canesten®)
- ▶ oral antifungal medication- Fluconazole (Diflucan One®). This should not be used if you are pregnant or think that you could be pregnant.

Putting plain yoghurt into the vagina has been advocated as an option for treating thrush, and whilst it may be soothing, there is very little evidence that this treatment works. The Lactobacilli in dairy products are quite different from the ones that are present in the vagina normally and are unlikely to survive long enough to do much good.

Treating partners has not been clearly shown to be of any benefit, but will often be suggested if a woman has recurrent infections.

● Recurrence

Some women experience repeated episodes of thrush. If this happens, a doctor may need to prescribe oral antifungal medication or recommend the weekly use of a vaginal tablet (pessary) for 6 months.

Wearing loose-fitting clothes, using cotton underwear and avoiding vaginal douching may also be helpful in stopping the problem from returning.

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