

Candidiasis (Thrush)

What is Candidiasis (“Thrush”)?

This is an infection usually of the vagina in women caused by a fungus or yeast called candida. This yeast is normally found on the skin and in the vagina. If there is an imbalance in the vagina, the candida can overgrow and cause unpleasant symptoms.

This imbalance can be caused by:

- The use of antibiotics (most frequent reason)
- Hormonal changes associated with pregnancy, high dose contraceptive pills or before a period.

It is not considered a sexually transmissible infection, although both men and women can get genital thrush.

What are the symptoms?

- The main symptom in women is itchiness on their vulva or inside the vagina. They may also have a discharge from the vagina that is thick and white.
- Men may notice itchy red spots on the head of the penis and under the foreskin.

What other problems can it cause?

It is not dangerous and does not cause other problems. However, if it keeps coming back after treatment it may indicate the person has lowered immunity or diabetes.

What tests do you do?

Often the doctor or nurse will be able to diagnose candida by looking. A swab from the vagina can be taken to look for the yeast.

What is the treatment?

- Thrush is easily treated with a short course of anti-fungal creams or pessaries (small tablets that dissolve when placed in the vagina).
- Treatment is available from a chemist without a doctor’s prescription. Loose fitting cotton clothes may be more comfortable while you have symptoms.
- If women have repeated episodes of thrush, longer-term treatment or oral tablets can be used. They should also have a check-up for other health problems.
- Thrush is not a sexually transmitted infection but if a partner does have symptoms then they should have a check-up.