

Thrush

Definition

- A superficial [yeast infection](#) of the mouth of young babies
- Causes white patches in the front of the mouth

Symptoms

- White, irregularly shaped patches in the mouth
- Coats the inside cheeks or inner lips
- Sometimes also coats the tongue
- Adherent to the mouth (cannot be washed away or wiped off easily like milk curds)
- Occasionally causes a painful mouth, reluctance to suck and reduced milk intake
- Mild discomfort or no symptoms in most newborns
- The infant is bottle-fed or breast-fed

Cause

- Caused by a yeast (called Candida)
- Occurs on parts of the mouth involved with sucking
- Accentuated by friction from frequent pacifier use

White Tongue Alone: Not Thrush

- If a white tongue is the only finding it's not due to thrush.
- A milk diet commonly causes a white coated tongue.
- This is normal and will go away after solid foods are introduced.
- Call your child's doctor during office hours if white patches occur inside the lips or cheeks.

Return to Child Care

- Thrush is not contagious, since it does not invade normal tissue. Your child can go to child care with thrush.



Care Advice

1. Anti-Yeast Medicine: Your doctor will probably prescribe an anti-yeast liquid medicine. Use it as follows:
 - a. Place 1 ml (2 ml if over age 1 month) in the front of the mouth on each side or where ever you see the thrush (it doesn't do any good once it's swallowed). Do this 4 times per day.
 - b. If the thrush isn't responding, rub the medicine directly on the affected areas with a cotton swab.
 - c. Don't feed your baby anything for 30 minutes after application.
 - d. Keep this up for at least 7 days, or until all thrush has been gone for 3 days.
2. Decrease Sucking Time to 20 Minutes per Feeding: Reason: prolonged sucking (as when a baby sleeps with a bottle) can irritate the lining of the mouth and make it more prone to yeast infection. For severe mouth pain with bottle feeding, offer fluids in a cup, spoon or syringe rather than a bottle (Reason: The nipple increases pain).
3. Limit Pacifier Use:
 - a. Again, prolonged sucking on a pacifier can irritate the mouth.
 - b. Limit pacifier use to times when nothing else will calm your baby.
 - c. If your infant is using an orthodontic pacifier, switch to a smaller, regular one (Reason: bigger ones can irritate the mouth more).
 - d. Special washing of pacifiers or bottle nipples is not necessary or helpful.
4. Breastfeeding: If the mother's nipples are red and sore, apply Lotrimin Cream (no prescription needed) 4 times per day AFTER [feedings](#).
5. Diaper Rash: If there's a bad diaper rash, it's also probably due to yeast. Apply Lotrimin cream (no prescription needed) 4 times per day.
6. Contagiousness: Thrush is not contagious, since it does not invade normal tissue. Your child can go to day care with thrush.
7. Expected Course: With treatment, thrush usually clears up in 4 to 5 days. Without treatment, it clears up in 2-8 weeks.

When To Call

Call Your Doctor Now (night or day) If

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Signs of dehydration (very dry mouth, no tears and no urine in more than 8 hours)
- Age under 1 month old and looks or acts abnormal in any way

Call Your Doctor Within 24 Hours (between 8 am and 4 pm) If

- Fever occurs
- Bleeding is present



- Drinking less than normal

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org

