

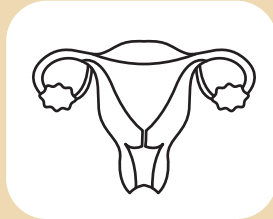
Thrush

This information is designed to be used in consultation with your health professional



What is it?

Thrush is a very common condition caused by an overgrowth of a yeast in the vagina. Most cases are caused by a yeast called *Candida albicans*, with about 10-20% of cases caused by *Candida glabrata*. Yeast is often found in the body without causing any problems. Around 75% of people with a vagina will have thrush at least once in their life.



Vaginal thrush can affect people of any age, but it is more common in people who get periods. It is unusual in people who have not started to have periods and after menopause.

What causes thrush?

Changes in levels of vaginal yeast can be caused by many different factors and vary from person to person. Some things that can make thrush more likely are:

- ➔ Taking antibiotics or certain medicines, such as those used in menopausal hormone therapy, or immunosuppressive medications
- ➔ Being pregnant or breastfeeding
- ➔ Health conditions like diabetes or an immune problem
- ➔ Having existing skin conditions like eczema or psoriasis
- ➔ Having higher levels of the hormone oestrogen, which can happen during the menstrual cycle, or pregnancy.

Some people find that using perfumed body soaps/gels or vaginal hygiene products can cause thrush for them. Others find that having sweaty or moist skin when doing high friction activities (like sports or sex) can also contribute.

Things that may help to prevent thrush include:

- ➔ Wearing cotton underwear
- ➔ Allowing your pubic hair to grow to reduce friction
- ➔ Avoiding tight-fitting clothing
- ➔ Changing your laundry detergent and avoiding fabric softeners
- ➔ Avoiding wet wipes and vaginal douching.



What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms of vulvovaginal thrush can include:

- ➔ itchiness, burning or soreness around the vulva and vagina
- ➔ a thick white lumpy vaginal discharge, almost like cottage cheese
- ➔ pain when urinating (peeing) or pain during sex.
- ➔ redness or swelling around the vulva and vagina.

Symptoms vary from person to person and not everyone with thrush will have symptoms.

Thrush can be diagnosed by examination, with the presence of candida being confirmed by vaginal swabs. It may also be found during a routine cervical screening test.

Thrush can also develop in the mouth, throat, or penis, with similar symptoms to vaginal thrush. Thrush isn't a sexually transmittable infection (STI), but sometimes it can develop after having sex with someone who has a yeast infection. In cases like this, both people can be treated to prevent it from happening again.

How is it treated?

Thrush does not have to be treated if it is not bothering you. Some people find their symptoms can be relieved by sitting in a warm salty bath or by using cold compresses.

If you think that thrush is the cause of your symptoms, there are a variety of treatment options available over the counter at the pharmacy, without a prescription. The treatment time can range from 1 to 7 days, depending on which one you use.

- ➔ Antifungal creams
- ➔ Antifungal pessaries (tablets inserted up into the vagina)
- ➔ Oral tablet (single dose, can be expensive)

If you are on any medications or are pregnant, speak with the pharmacist or your doctor before using oral thrush tablets.

Putting yoghurt on an irritated vulva will not get rid of thrush.

Can I have sex if I have thrush?

Yes – you do not have to avoid sex if you have thrush. However, it may feel uncomfortable and cause irritation or soreness, so people may decide to not have sex while they have thrush symptoms.

What if I keep getting thrush?

If you are finding that thrush is a frequent problem, or the over-the-counter treatments haven't worked, speak with your healthcare professional. They can assess if thrush is the cause and may prescribe an alternative treatment.

There are other conditions that can cause itchiness and soreness, such as eczema, bacterial vaginosis, herpes simplex virus (HSV) or other STIs. If you have genital itching or soreness that persists after thrush treatments, see a health professional.