

Thrush (candidiasis)

Thrush is caused by a germ (yeast infection) called *Candida*. Most people have this germ on their skin, in their mouth and in their gut, where it does not cause any trouble. However, it can sometimes cause infections, especially in moist places such as babies' mouths, in skin folds or in the nappy area. It is often associated with nappy rash – if a nappy rash is not clearing after 3 days or not responding to the usual barrier cream, it may be thrush. Thrush often causes skin irritation or soreness, but is not usually dangerous.

Thrush can also infect the vagina, or the nipples of breastfeeding mothers.

Thrush may look like white spots or flakes. When the skin is involved it usually looks red with small spots or pimples (pustules) in the surrounding area.

How it spreads

Thrush spreads from person to person by direct contact with the germs living on the skin, in the mouth or vagina, or in faeces (poo). A baby may pick up *Candida* during birth.

Candida lives in the human digestive tract from early infancy. Most of the time it does not cause disease.

Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with thrush can attend the service.

Actions for educators and other staff

Do not allow children to share dummies, cups or eating utensils.

Regularly wash toys and other objects that children put in their mouths.

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Use the online symptom checker (see below) or see a pharmacist or doctor to decide if your child needs treatment.

Clean and sterilise your baby's bottle teats and dummies, and replace them regularly.

Do not share your baby's eating utensils, food or drinking cups.

Thoroughly wash toys that your baby or toddler puts in their mouth.

More information about thrush

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of thrush (healthdirect.gov.au/thrush-and-other-fungal-infections).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.