

## Lactation-related Yeast Infection

Please contact your PCP or OB to confirm the diagnosis.

Thrush (candidiasis) is an overgrowth of a yeast-like fungus, *Candida albicans*. *Candida* grows well in dark, moist places and thrives on the sugar in breastmilk. It is not surprising, therefore, that breastfeeding women sometimes have to deal with this annoying problem.

It is usually, but not always, recommended that mother and baby be treated at the same time, even if the baby is totally without symptoms (no white plaques in the mouth). An untreated baby can harbor *Candida* and return it to the mother repeatedly. Contact your baby's physician to discuss this.

Thrush usually develops suddenly after a period of comfortable breastfeeding. The nipples and the areolar tissue at the base of the nipple usually look red. The areolar skin may look tight and shiny, and may crack easily. The pain (often described as burning) does not improve no matter how well your baby is latched, and the nipples and areolae may be very sensitive all the time, not just when feeding. Mothers who have taken antibiotics are more at risk for thrush.

### TREATMENT

**2% miconazole nitrate** (Monistat 7) and **1% clotrimazole** (Lotrimin) are antifungal creams that can be purchased without a prescription. Massage generously into your nipples and areolae after every breastfeeding (or pump session) for three days at which point you should be feeling much better. Continue at least four times daily until you have had no symptoms for four days. If your nipples are very sore you may try an over-the-counter **1% hydrocortisone ointment**, such as **Cortaid™**. Massage this in, along with the antifungal cream, three times daily for three days.

Use warm water to wipe away any residue prior to the next breastfeed. There is no need for vigorous washing.

If your baby has been diagnosed with thrush **rinse your breasts** after every breastfeed with a solution of 1 teaspoon white vinegar in 1 cup water. Some women find it helpful to clean the nipples whether or not baby has symptoms of thrush. You can soak some sterile cotton balls in the vinegar solution and keep them in a plastic storage bag for convenient use.

Use disposable nursing pads (change with every feed) and wash your bra daily in very hot, soapy water. Boil pump parts, pacifiers and bottle nipples daily during treatment. Air the breasts when you can. A few minutes in the sun may help.

Some mothers report that taking **probiotic** supplements is helpful. Please ask your physician for advice.

Please schedule an appointment with your OB, PCP or dermatologist if your symptoms are not steadily resolving.