

Your important health information

Breast and nipple thrush

What is thrush?

Thrush is a fungal infection that can occur in the nipple and/or breast or in a baby's mouth. Sometimes it may occur on other places on the body. Thrush may be linked to recent antibiotic use or a history of vaginal thrush. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

Symptoms

Mother

- Nipple pain even with good positioning and attachment.
- Burning, itching or stinging of the nipple.
- Nipples may be sore to light touch.
- Breast pain may be:
 - stabbing or shooting
 - a deep ache
 - a burning feeling that goes into the breast
 - in one or both breasts, during or after feeds.

Signs

Mother

- The nipple/s may look bright pink.
- The areola (the darker area around the nipple) may be red, dry or flaky.
- A white rash may be seen.
- Slow healing nipple damage.
- The nipple may look normal.

Baby

- Pulls off the breast often, is fussy and unsettled.
- White patches can be on the insides of the cheeks, lips, tongue and the roof of the mouth which cannot be removed when touched/scraped by your finger.
- Has a red nappy rash, with spots around the edges.

Treatment

Mother and baby must be treated at the same time

Treatment for mother

- Keep on breastfeeding or expressing to prevent breast engorgement or blocked ducts/mastitis.
- Put on a thin layer of antifungal gel (Daktarin) to nipples and areola:
 - Four times a day, after feeds, for one week
 - Then once a day for two weeks.
- A prescription for oral antifungal tablets (Fluconazole and Nystatin) may be needed from your doctor.
- If nipple pain is not getting better, the use of gentian violet solution 0.5% has been found to be helpful. You will need a prescription for this. For more information contact your lactation consultant.
- Air dry the nipples, leave the bra off at night.
- Change breast pads after each feed.

Treatment for baby

Daktarin oral gel OR Nystatin oral drops can be used. Do not use both at the same time.

Daktarin oral gel:

- Must be used properly. **Do not use the spoon supplied to give your baby the gel.**
- Use a clean finger to rub small amounts onto each area inside baby's mouth, cheeks and tongue.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of a teaspoon four times a day after feeds for one week.
- Then once a day for two weeks.

Nystatin oral drops:

- Use the dropper supplied.
- Drip 1ml into your baby's mouth four times a day after feeds for one week.
- Then once a day for two weeks.

For thrush nappy rash use an antifungal cream or ointment such as Daktozin or Canesten:

- A zinc and castor oil mixture may help protect the baby's bottom.
- Use water and cotton wool or a soft cloth to clean baby's nappy area instead of baby wipes.
- Leave baby's bottom open to fresh air at least once a day.

Hygiene

- Treat any of the family who may have a fungal infection, for example vagina, nappy rash and feet.
- Wash hands well before and after breastfeeding, after nappy changes, applying creams or ointments, or going to the toilet.
- Clean breast pump parts, bottle teats, dummies or nipple shields with hot soapy water and boil for five minutes after each use.
- Replace bottle teats and dummies each week.
- Change bra daily or more often if needed.
- Wash towels, bras, cloth breast pads and nappies in hot soapy water, add ½ cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle and air dry outside.
- Avoid sharing towels with other family members.
- Use separate towels to dry upper and lower body.
- Wipe the baby's bath using a weak mixture of 1 teaspoon of household bleach to 200ml of water.

Diet

- Eat a healthy well balanced diet and get plenty of rest.
- Try to cut out or cut down on:
 - foods with high sugar content for example grapes, dried fruits, melons, fruit juice, jam, honey
 - yeast bread, vegemite, refined starches (white flour).
 - alcohol, vinegar
 - aged cheese, dairy products
 - peanuts and peanut butter.
- Include acidophilus in diet for example plain natural yoghurt, lactobacillus capsules/powder.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Mercy Hospital for Women

Breastfeeding Support Service Phone: 03 8458 4677

Pharmacy Phone: 03 8458 4666

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Breastfeeding Support Service Phone: 03 8754 3407

Pharmacy Phone: 03 8754 3541

Other services

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline

Phone: 1800 686 268 www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Maternal & Child Health Line Phone: 13 22 29

Private Lactation Consultant www.lcanz.org

Acknowledgements

Produced by: Lactation Departments MHW & WMH

Date produced: October 2004

Date of last review: April 2020

Date for review: April 2022