

What is Thrush and why does it happen?

Thrush is a fungal infection caused by yeast, primarily *Candida*. The Breastfeeding Network (2014) suggest that thrush (*Candida Albicans*) is over diagnosed at present. Before treating either you or your baby your health care provider should observe a full breastfeed, to include observation of the shape of the nipple after the feed.

Further information www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk

Causes

- It can occur if either mother or baby has received antibiotics.
- It can occur if mother had vaginal thrush at time of birth.

Signs and symptoms

Mothers may experience a stabbing, shooting, burning pain in **both breasts**, usually after a feed.

The nipple may be red and shiny.

The baby may have a white tongue or coating on the tongue (white plaques on the tongue that **do not rub away**).

A baby may pull from the breast, possibly due to a sore tongue/mouth. Observe the baby's mouth/tongue for white plaque patches. *Take care not to misdiagnose thrush for a white milky tongue, which is normal.*

Thrush should not be diagnosed if...

- There is pain in only one breast
- If the nipples are shaped oddly and not round and long after a feed
- If the nipple has a white colour after breastfeeding
- If breastfeeding was never pain free
- If the pain is different at different times of the day
- If the baby was diagnosed with a tongue tie

Self-help measures

- Regular hand washing is paramount.
- Following a feed, rinse the nipple to remove milk residue, pat dry.
- Use a separate towel for each family member.
- Wash bra, baby clothes at 60 degree centigrade to kill the thrush spores.
- Dietary Probiotics such as greek yoghurt, reduce sugar in the diet

Treatment (health professional/GP)

- Swab nipple and baby's mouth to confirm thrush.
- Miconazole Gel, applied inside baby's mouth four times a day.
- Miconazole cream applied to the nipple sparingly following feeds
- If symptoms persist Oral Fluconazole may be prescribed.