
Yeast Infections

Description: Yeast infections are caused by various species of *Candida*, especially *Candida albicans*.

These organisms are part of the germs normally found in various parts of the body and ordinarily do not cause any symptoms. Certain conditions such as antibiotic use or excessive moisture, may upset the balance of microbes and allow an overgrowth of *Candida*. In most persons, these infections flare up and then heal.

However, in newborns or persons with weak immune systems, this yeast can cause more serious or chronic infections.

Candida may also exacerbate diaper rash, as this yeast grows readily on damaged skin. The infected skin is usually fiery red with lesions that may have a raised red border. Children who suck their thumbs or other fingers may occasionally develop *Candida* around their fingernails.

Many infants acquire *Candida* infections from their mothers during birth. Many of those that escape this infection soon acquire *Candida* from close contacts with other family members and doting relatives and friends. In older persons, treatment with certain types of antibiotics or inhaled steroids (for asthma) may upset the balance of microbes in the mouth, allowing an overgrowth of *Candida* that will also result in thrush. Outbreaks of thrush in child care settings may be the result of increased use of antibiotics rather than newly acquired *Candida* infections.

Symptoms: Infection of the skin, mouth or tongue that appears as white spots that can not be scraped off without causing bleeding. It may also occur in the folds of skin in the diapered areas.

How it is Spread: Direct contact with secretion from infected areas. Contact with stool of carriers.

Incubation: It variable, for infants 2-5 days.

How Long Can a Person Pass the Infection to Others? As long as the lesions are visible.

Responsibilities of Parents and Caregivers:

- For children with diaper rash, child care providers should change the diaper frequently, gently clean the child's skin with water and a mild soap and pat dry. While cornstarch or baby powder may be recommended for mild diaper rash, it should not be used for children with inflamed skin. High absorbency disposable diapers may help keep the skin dry.
- Children with thrush and *Candida* diaper rash need not be excluded from child care as long they are able to participate comfortably.
- Child care providers should follow good hygiene including careful hand washing and disposal of nasal and oral secretions of children with thrush in order to avoid transmitting the infection to children who are not already infected.

Treatment: Oral thrush and *Candida* diaper rash are usually treated with the topical antibiotic nystatin. A corticosteroid cream can be applied to highly inflamed skin lesions on the hands or diaper areas. Medical treatment is limited by the age of the child.