

## Infections - fungal



# Candida (Thrush) in Babies

## Important points

- Candida in the mouth may occur following antibiotic use
- Candida occurs on skin that is already inflamed
- Carefully dry the skin folds after bathing
- Avoid using plastic pants or nappies when possible
- Treatment for candida on the skin may include both cortisone creams and specific anticandida preparations prescribed by a doctor
- When it is in the mouth, there are anti-candida gels or drops
- To prevent candida in the nappy area
  - change nappies frequently
  - wash and carefully dry the nappy area
  - protect the skin of the groin and nappy area with a moisturising barrier such as paraffin or zinc cream

## What is it?

Candida or thrush is a common infection of the skin caused by the yeast *Candida albicans*. It likes to grow in warm and moist areas such as the mouth (oral candida), creases of the skin in the groin, around the bottom, or occasionally in the armpits.

In the mouth, it causes one or more white creamy crumbly patches associated with redness. It affects most commonly the lining of the cheeks, but may occasionally involve the gums, the palate (roof of the mouth) or the tongue.

Candida occurs deep into the folds of skin such as the groin or around the bottom. It then spreads down onto the thighs or buttocks away from the areas of skin contact. It does not occur on normal skin so there is commonly an underlying eczema (dermatitis) which has become infected by the candida. This is common in the nappy area which is warm and moist. The infected skin develops a glazed red appearance and there may be some scaling at the edge with small spots spreading away from the skin folds.

### **What causes it?**

Candida exists without causing any problems in the mouth of 20% of the general population. If there is a change in local conditions, such as the use of antibiotics, there can be overgrowth of candida. Food left in the mouth, including sweet drinks and milk, may also contribute to the development of oral candida infection.

Moisture and warmth in the flexures (folds of the skin), particularly where dermatitis is also present, can make candida infection of the skin more likely. If candida develops in dermatitis in the flexures the use of a cortisone cream without also using anti-candida treatment, may allow the candida to get worse.

### **How is it treated?**

Specific anti-candida treatments include creams for nappy areas and gels or drops for the mouth. Creams may be recommended along with a mild cortisone cream for any dermatitis that is present. If the mother has candida of the vagina or the nipples she will require treatment by a doctor.

General measures to help prevent the conditions in which candida likes to grow include:

- stopping antibiotics as soon as possible
- carefully drying all the skin folds after bathing
- using loose-fitting clothing to avoid overheating
- adequate treatment of any underlying dermatitis or nappy rash

### **Further information**

Your Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Your pharmacist.

Your family doctor.

A dermatologist.

***Related Information Sheet: [Eczema/Candida \(Thrush\) of the Nipple](#)***