

What is chronic vaginal thrush?

Chronic vaginal thrush is when you have 4 or more episodes of thrush in 12 months.

The symptoms of chronic thrush may be constant. They often get worse the week before menstruation, then improve on the first day of bleeding. Although itching, soreness, and pain with intercourse can be present, most people do not have much discharge with chronic thrush.

If you are experiencing chronic thrush symptoms, you should see a doctor and have test to confirm it is thrush. Then you and your doctor can decide what the best treatment option is for you.

The treatment for chronic thrush often includes an extended course of oral tablets over a few months. You will need a prescription from a doctor for this.

How can I prevent vaginal thrush?

Thrush is common and affects most people with a vagina at some time in their life.

While there is no known way guaranteed to prevent thrush, practicing good vulval care may be helpful - see SHFPACT's Vulval Care factsheet.

Is vaginal thrush a sexually transmissible infection?

No, vaginal thrush is not a sexually transmissible infection. The organism that can cause thrush occurs naturally in the vagina in low numbers. Anyone with a vagina can get vaginal thrush, including people who have never had sexual intercourse or who don't have a partner. However, partners with a penis can sometimes experience some redness and irritation after sexual intercourse.

Can I still have sexual intercourse when I have thrush?

Sexual intercourse is possible when experiencing vaginal thrush, especially if you don't have many symptoms, but keep in mind:

- It may be uncomfortable as the vulva and vagina may already be irritated. You may experience a burning sensation during and after sexual activity. Using a good lubricant can help to protect the skin.
- The topical treatment for thrush (cream or pessaries) can damage latex condoms and increase the risk of them breaking.

SHFPACT Clinical Services

- Contraceptive Advice, Information & Services
- IUD's and other Long Acting Contraceptive Options
- Cervical Screening
- Canberra Menopause Centre
- Pregnancy Options Counselling
- Sexually Transmissible Infections(STIs):
- Testing, Treatment and Advice
- Blood borne virus and HIV testing
- Emergency Contraception (the 'Morning After' Pill)
- Breast Checks and Breast Awareness Education
- Fertility Issues and Pre-conception Advice
- Sexual Difficulties and Sexuality Education
- PrEP Information, Advice, and Prescription

References:

Australian STI Management Guidelines for use in Primary Care. <https://sti.guidelines.org.au/sexually-transmissible-infections/candidiasis/>
 The facts about thrush ANVS/ Australian and New Zealand Vulvovaginal Society Vulvovaginal candidiasis Factsheet/ Australian and New Zealand Vulvovaginal Society Candidiasis (vulvovaginal) treatment guidelines - Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (MSHC)

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Vaginal thrush



What is vaginal thrush?

Vaginal thrush (sometimes called candidiasis) is a common condition caused by an overgrowth of yeast organisms that live naturally in the vagina. *Candida albicans* is the name of the most common of these organisms. These organisms are mostly harmless, but symptoms can develop if numbers in the vagina increase. Around 75% of people with a vagina will have thrush at least once in their lifetime.

Vaginal thrush can be acute (a single episode) or chronic (recurring or persisting for a long time).

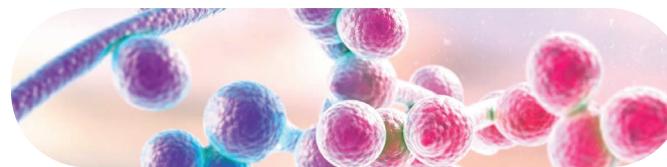
The hormone oestrogen helps the yeast organism to grow, so thrush is rare before puberty or after menopause when there is little oestrogen in your body.

What are the symptoms of vaginal thrush?

Sometimes you can have vaginal thrush and not have any symptoms. However, in most cases, you will get some symptoms.

Symptoms can include any of the following:

- An itchy, sore vulva
- Burning when passing urine
- Redness and swelling of the vulva
- A white, yeasty-smelling discharge (that looks a bit like cottage cheese)
- Splits in the skin of your vulva and genital area
- Vaginal discomfort during sexual intercourse



Why does a vaginal thrush infection occur?

Vaginal thrush often occurs for no apparent reason. However, certain factors increase the likelihood of it occurring. These include:

- Taking certain antibiotics
- Being pregnant
- Having diabetes
- Having sweaty and moist skin
- Having another skin condition (e.g., eczema or psoriasis)
- Medication or treatment that suppresses your immunity

Do I need a test for thrush?

If you have symptoms, ideally you should see a doctor and have a vaginal swab taken for testing to see whether it is vaginal thrush or some other cause, particularly if it has not responded to initial over the counter treatments.

It is also possible to have more than one infection at the same time (e.g., thrush and a sexually transmissible infection).

If the problem recurs and the symptoms are the same, you may not need to repeat the swab before treating it. However, if anything is different from a previous episode, a repeat swab may be recommended.

What is the treatment for thrush?

Sometimes symptoms may only last a short time, and you may not need treatment.

If you do need treatment, there are the following options:

• Antifungal creams or vaginal pessaries

Antifungal cream or pessaries are inserted into the vagina at bedtime using an applicator that comes in the pack. You can also use the cream around the vulva.

Treatment with cream or pessaries can vary from a single dose to a 3, 6, or 14-night course.

It is essential to use the entire course, even if you get your period.

These treatments are available from the pharmacist without a prescription.

• Single-dose oral tablets

Oral tablets are available as a single dose over the counter in pharmacies. They have the same effectiveness as the cream/pessaries. Sometimes, your doctor may recommend using both the oral tablets and the cream/pessaries simultaneously.

Oral tablets for thrush cannot be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

If you do not have symptoms, you do not need to treat the thrush.



Does my sexual partner need to have treatment?

No, there is no evidence that it is helpful to treat partners with a penis.