

# Thrush

## Usually harmless and easily treatable

Oral thrush in babies and young children is a fungal infection in the mouth caused by a yeast fungus called *Candida albicans*. Babies are at an increased risk of oral thrush because their immune systems haven't yet fully developed and are less able to resist infection. This is particularly the case with babies born prematurely. It looks like spots or patches of cottage cheese or milk curds in and around your baby's mouth. These patches may appear inside the cheeks. If your baby has a white coating on their tongue that can be rubbed off easily, it's probably milk coating the tongue and not thrush.

Babies may not seem bothered by the patches, but they may be reluctant to feed, or keep detaching from the breast during feeds if they're sore.

There may also be associated nappy rash caused by the same infection that needs to be treated as well.

Oral thrush in babies isn't usually serious, but you should visit your GP if you think your child may have the condition. You can also ask your health visitor for advice or call NHS 111. If your GP or health visitor feels your baby needs treatment, they'll probably prescribe an antifungal medicine.

- Sterilise dummies regularly, as well as any toys that your baby puts in their mouth.
- Sterilise bottles and other feeding equipment regularly.

Washing your hands thoroughly after changing your baby's nappy can also be helpful in stopping thrush spreading because the infection can be passed through their digestive system.

### Antibiotics

Oral thrush can also affect babies if they've recently been treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics reduce the levels of healthy bacteria in your baby's mouth, which can allow fungus levels to increase. If you are breastfeeding and have been taking antibiotics for an infection, your own levels of healthy bacteria in your body can be affected.

This can also make you prone to a thrush infection that may then be passed to your baby during breastfeeding

### Health visitor says

If your baby has oral thrush and you're breastfeeding, it is possible for your baby to pass a thrush infection to you.

You can contact your health visitor for advice and support.

Visit the link: [www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/dibm/thrush-oct14.pdf](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/dibm/thrush-oct14.pdf)