The Women's Natural Health Clinic
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Vaginal Thrush (Candida)

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Key facts

- Thrush is a common yeast infection that most women have at least once.
- Typical symptoms are itching, soreness and a thick white discharge.
- Antifungal pessaries, creams or a single tablet usually clear it within a week.
- Four or more episodes a year is called recurrent thrush and should be investigated.
- Probiotics and simple self-care measures may help reduce recurrence.

What is vaginal thrush?

Thrush is an infection caused by an overgrowth of Candida, a yeast that normally lives harmlessly in the vagina, mouth and gut. It is not a sexually transmitted infection, although sex can sometimes trigger symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

- Itching and soreness around the vagina and vulva
- A thick white discharge, often described as like cottage cheese, usually without a strong smell
- Stinging when passing urine
- Discomfort during sex

See a doctor or sexual health clinic if it is your first episode, if you are pregnant or under 16, if the discharge smells or is coloured, if you have pelvic pain or blisters, or if treatment does not work. These can be signs of a different infection.

What makes thrush more likely?

- Antibiotics, which disturb the healthy bacteria in the vagina
- Pregnancy and hormonal contraception
- Diabetes, especially when blood sugar is not well controlled
- A weakened immune system, for example from steroid medicines
- Perfumed soaps, bubble baths and vaginal washes, and tight synthetic clothing

What are the conventional treatment options?

Antifungal medicines are available from a pharmacy or GP, as a pessary, cream or a single oral tablet (fluconazole). Symptoms usually settle within a week. Recurrent thrush is treated with a longer course of antifungal tablets, often taken weekly for six months, after confirming the diagnosis with a swab.

How do we treat thrush at the Women’s Natural Health Clinic?

For women with recurrent thrush, we look at the whole picture and work alongside conventional treatment. Your plan may include:

- **Probiotics**, high potency vaginal probiotic preparations, to help restore healthy normal vaginal bacteria.
- **Diet and lifestyle review**, including blood sugar control and gut health.

- **Chinese herbal medicine**, prescribed according to your pattern, often addressing damp-heat in Traditional Chinese Medicine.
- **Investigation** of contributing factors such as hormonal changes or other infections.

Self-help to prevent thrush

- Wash with plain water or an emollient rather than soap, and avoid vaginal douches and deodorants
- Wear cotton underwear and avoid tight jeans, leggings and tights where possible
- Change out of damp swimwear or gym clothes promptly

Frequently asked questions

Is thrush sexually transmitted?

No. Thrush is not classed as a sexually transmitted infection, and partners do not usually need treatment unless they have symptoms.

Why do I keep getting thrush?

Recurrent thrush can be linked to antibiotics, hormones, diabetes, abnormal vaginal pH level or a less common type of Candida. A swab can confirm the diagnosis and guide treatment.

Can I treat thrush in pregnancy?

Yes. Pessaries and creams are used in pregnancy; oral fluconazole should be avoided.

Book a consultation

To book, visit womensnaturalhealthclinic.com/book or call 020 3811 8778. Initial consultations last up to one hour at our clinic at 16 Bridle Lane, St Margaret's, Twickenham TW1 3EE.

Sources

- NHS: Thrush (nhs.uk/conditions/thrush-in-men-and-women)
- NICE CKS: Candida, female genital (cks.nice.org.uk/topics/candida-female-genital)