



Caring for Babies with Thrush

What is Thrush?

Thrush is a common illness in the mouth of infants. It is caused by a fungus or yeast infection. Your baby will have white, flaky, thick patches that may cover all or part of the tongue, lips and walls of the mouth. These patches will not wipe off easily. Once removed, red areas may be seen on the tongue. Attention needs to be given to the mother who is breastfeeding as the infection may be passed to her nipples.

Care Instructions for Baby:

- Wipe or rinse mouth with water after each feeding.
- After rinsing mouth, apply antifungal medication as instructed by health care provider.
- Feed your baby before giving medicine. Do not feed your baby for 10 to 15 minutes after you apply the medicine.
- For diaper rash associated with thrush, wipe the bottom with soapy water, rinse, dry and apply antifungal cream as instructed.
- Boil items that come in contact with milk or infected areas, such as breast shells, bottle nipples, pump parts and pacifiers, for 20 minutes each day.

Care Instructions for Breastfeeding Mom:

- Rinse breasts with water and white vinegar wash after nursing or pumping (mix one tablespoon white vinegar with one cup water).
- Apply antifungal cream as instructed by health care provider to nipples/areola after rinsing and allow nipples to air dry. Wipe off breast before feeding again to remove any antifungal cream.
- Wear breast shells.
- Avoid wearing breast pads. If they are needed, change frequently.
- Wash cotton bras and pads **daily** in hot soapy water.
- Take mild pain medicine as health care provider instructs.
- If nipples are too painful to nurse, express milk or use breast pump and feed baby by cup, spoon or bottle.
- Stay away from sweets, yeast and dairy products.

Important points:

- Both mom and baby need to follow all instructions provided by their health care provider. Typical instructions given advise treatment for two weeks and at least one to two weeks after symptoms are gone. Follow specific instructions for taking medications.
- Notify health care provider if symptoms do not improve in five days (different strains of yeast infection respond to different antifungal medications).
- If breastfeeding, always treat both mom and baby to prevent them from re-infecting each other.
- Consider seeing a dermatologist if nipple symptoms are still unresolved after 10 days of suggested treatment and after trying two different antifungal medicines.
- Do not freeze milk to be used at a later time, since freezing milk does not kill fungal organism.

For more information, contact Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or www.myguilford.com