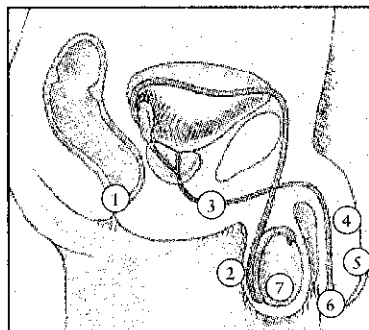




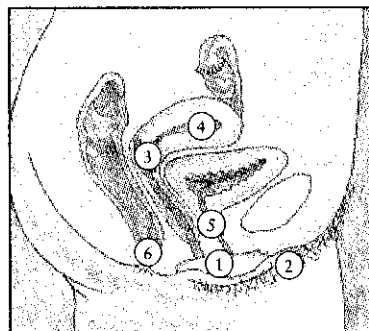
# Thrush (candida albicans)

Thrush is caused by a yeast that normally lives harmlessly on the skin, or in the mouth, gut and vagina without causing any problems. Normally it is kept in check by harmless bacteria. Occasionally conditions change and the yeast increases rapidly, causing symptoms. (This is called clinical thrush or candidiasis.)



### *Men – know your body*

- ① Anus
- ② Scrotum
- ③ Urethra
- ④ Penis
- ⑤ Foreskin
- ⑥ Glans
- ⑦ Testicles



### *Women – know your body*

- ① Vagina
- ② Clitoris
- ③ Cervix
- ④ Womb
- ⑤ Urethra
- ⑥ Anus

# Thrush (candida albicans)

## *Signs and symptoms*

Both men and women can get thrush. It is more likely to develop in men who are not circumcised.

### **Women**

There may be one or more symptoms, including:

- itching, soreness and redness around the vagina, vulva or anus
- a thick, white discharge from the vagina that looks like cottage cheese and smells yeasty
- a swollen vulva
- pain when you have sex
- pain when you pass urine

### **Men**

There may be one or more symptoms, including:

- irritation, burning or itching under the foreskin or on the tip of the penis
- a redness, or red patches, under the foreskin or on the tip of the penis
- a thick, cheesy discharge under the foreskin
- difficulty in pulling back the foreskin
- a slight discharge from the urethra
- discomfort when you pass urine

## *How thrush develops*

Your chances of developing thrush are increased if you:

- are pregnant
- wear lycra shorts or tight nylon clothes
- take certain antibiotics
- use too much vaginal deodorant or perfumed bubble bath, causing irritation
- have sex with someone who has a thrush infection

## *Where to go for help*

- Your own GP.
- Your local NHS sexual health (GUM) clinic. You can find details of your nearest NHS sexual health clinic in the phone book under genito-urinary medicine (GUM), sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or venereal diseases (VD). Or phone your local hospital and ask for the 'special' or GUM clinic. You will get free, confidential advice and treatment. You can go to any clinic anywhere in the country – you don't have to go to a local one – and you don't have to be referred by your GP. (Non-NHS sexual health clinics may not always offer the full range of services which are available at NHS sexual health clinics.)

If you have been treated for thrush before and the symptoms have returned, your pharmacist can sell you a treatment. If the symptoms persist, go to your GP or a sexual health clinic.

## *The tests for thrush*

- An examination of your genital area is carried out by a doctor or a nurse.
- Samples are taken, using a cotton-wool or spongy swab, from anywhere you may have thrush.
- Men may have a swab scraped gently from under the foreskin.
- Women may be given an internal pelvic examination.
- A sample of urine may be taken.

## *Diagnosis and treatment*

Samples taken during the examination are looked at under a microscope to check for infection. In clinics, the result is available immediately. A second sample may be sent to a laboratory for testing, the result of which is available usually within one week.

Treatment is easy. Women may be given pessaries (long tablets), to insert into the vagina using a special applicator, and also a cream. The cream is applied externally to the genital area – the doctor or nurse will explain how. On some occasions pills are given instead.

**You should get individual advice about having sex during treatment from your doctor, nurse or health adviser.**

*(continued overleaf)*



# Thrush (candida albicans)

### *Follow-up*

It is advisable to return for a check-up after you have completed the treatment to make sure that the thrush is gone.

Any man can develop thrush, but it is more likely in uncircumcised men, who should wash under their foreskins as part of their daily routine.

### *Complications*

The symptoms of thrush may go away without treatment but it can get very sore. Sometimes men get an uncomfortable swelling of the foreskin, but complications are rare.

**Remember, after treatment, using condoms during sex can reduce your risk of getting or passing on sexually transmitted infections.**

This factsheet is one of a series which give information on the following range of infections and diseases: bacterial vaginosis, chlamydia, cystitis, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhoea, hepatitis (A, B and C), non-specific urethritis, penile cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), prostate cancer, pubic lice, scabies, syphilis, testicular cancer, thrush and trichomonas vaginalis.

**Free copies of any of these factsheets are available from GP surgeries, NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics, or your local health promotion unit (in the phone book under your local Health Authority).**

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