

Thrush

Many women have an occasional bout of vaginal thrush. It is due to an infection with types of fungal yeast called *Candida* spp. Treatment options include a tablet that you can take by mouth, or anti-thrush pessaries that you can insert into the vagina. There is also anti-thrush cream that you can rub on to the skin around the vagina (the vulva) if needed. You can buy treatment for thrush from a pharmacy.

What are the symptoms of vaginal thrush?

Thrush is the second most common cause of a vaginal discharge. (The most common cause of vaginal discharge is bacterial vaginosis. A separate leaflet called [Bacterial Vaginosis](#) gives more details.)

The discharge from thrush is usually creamy white and quite thick, but is sometimes watery. It can cause itch, redness, discomfort, or pain around the outside of the vagina (the vulva). The discharge from thrush does not usually smell. Some women can have some pain or discomfort whilst having sex or whilst passing urine if they have thrush. Sometimes symptoms are minor and clear up on their own. Often symptoms can be quite irritating and will not go without treatment.

Thrush does not damage the vagina, and it does not spread to damage the womb (uterus). If you are pregnant, thrush will not harm your baby.

Do I need any tests?

If you are having recurring symptoms, your doctor or nurse may examine you and take some swabs to confirm the cause. Also, the doctor or nurse may check a urine sample if you have recurring thrush, to rule out diabetes.

What are the treatment options for vaginal thrush?

You can obtain treatments on prescription, or you can buy them without a prescription at pharmacies. Side-effects are uncommon, but read the information leaflet that comes with the treatment for full information.

In general, you can use these topical treatments if you are pregnant but you should always check with your doctor or pharmacist. Treatment is usually needed for longer during pregnancy.

Note: some pessaries and creams may damage latex condoms and diaphragms and affect their use as a contraceptive. You should use alternative methods of contraception during treatment and for several days afterwards.

Note: tablets and topical treatments are thought to be equally effective. Tablets are more convenient, but are more expensive than most topical treatments.

Other things that may help

If you have thrush, you may also find the following things help to relieve your symptoms:

- Avoiding wearing tight-fitting clothing, especially clothing made from synthetic materials. Loose-fitting, natural fibre underwear may be better.
- Avoiding washing underwear with biological washing powders or liquids and avoiding the use of fabric conditioners.

- Avoiding using perfumed products around the vaginal area, such as soaps and shower gels, as these may cause further irritation.
- Using a simple emollient every day as a moisturiser to protect the skin around the vulva.

However, remember, a vaginal discharge or vulval itch can be due to a number of causes. So, do not assume all discharges or itch are thrush.

When should I seek medical help?

- Are under 16 or over 60 years of age.
- Are pregnant.
- Have abnormal vaginal bleeding.
- Have lower tummy (abdominal) pain.
- Are unwell in yourself in addition to the vaginal and vulval symptoms.
- Have symptoms that are not entirely the same as a previous bout of thrush. For example, if the discharge has a bad smell, or if you develop ulcers or blisters next to your vagina.
- Have had two episodes of thrush in six months, and have not consulted a doctor or nurse about this for more than a year.
- Have had a previous sexually transmitted infection (or your partner has).
- Have had a previous bad reaction to anti-thrush medication or treatments.
- Have a weakened immune system - for example, if you are on chemotherapy treatment for cancer or are taking long-term steroid medication for whatever reason.
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Patient Info <https://patient.info/health/vaginal-discharge-female-discharge/vaginal-thrush-yeast-infection>

NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/thrush-in-men-and-women/>