

Oral Thrush

Oral thrush is usually harmless. It's common in babies and older people with dentures. It can be easily treated without the need to visit a GP. Speak to [your pharmacist](#) if you develop symptoms of oral thrush as some treatments are available without a prescription.

Symptoms in Adults

- Mouth is red inside and you have white patches
- Cracks at the corners of the mouth
- Not tasting things properly
- An unpleasant taste in the mouth
- Pain inside the mouth, for example a sore tongue or sore gums
- Difficulty eating and drinking

Symptoms in Babies

- A white coating on the tongue like cottage cheese – this can't be rubbed off easily
- They don't want to feed
- Nappy rash

N.B. If your baby is less than 4 months old seek advice from your GP

Oral thrush in adults isn't contagious; however babies can pass oral thrush on through breastfeeding. This can cause nipple thrush in mothers.

How can I avoid triggers / suggested lifestyle changes

Thrush is an infection caused by a fungus called Candida. Some things can make the fungus grow more than usual. You might get thrush if you are:

- Taking antibiotics over a long time
- Using asthma inhalers (steroids)
- Diabetic
- Getting cancer treatment like chemotherapy

Below are some tips on how to help prevent oral thrush

Do

- Take care of your teeth: brush twice a day, clean your dentures, go for regular check-ups even if you have dentures
- Brush your gums and tongue with a soft toothbrush (if you don't have any teeth)
- Sterilise dummies and bottles regularly
- Rinse your mouth after eating or taking medicine
- Go to regular check-ups if you have a long-term condition like diabetes

Don't

- Wear your dentures at night
- Keep wearing dentures if they don't fit properly – see your dentist
- Smoke

How do I treat?

There is usually no need to visit your GP to treat oral thrush. Treatments can be bought from pharmacies allowing you to treat yourself at home without having to visit the doctor. Your pharmacist will provide you advice on the dose and how to use the treatment.

- **Locally applied treatment** – the treatment is usually the use of an antifungal oral gel every day for at least 7 days.
 - Always follow the instructions that come with the medicine
 - Ideally, you should not eat or drink for about 30 minutes after using the gel. This helps to prevent the medicine from being washed out of your mouth too soon.
- **Speak to your pharmacist** - for advice if you're not sure which type of medicine is best for you/ your baby.

When should I seek advice?

If left untreated, the symptoms will often persist and your mouth will continue to feel uncomfortable. If your symptoms continue - see [your GP](#).

- In severe cases that are left untreated, there is also a risk of the infection spreading further into your body. This can be serious.
- If you suffer from oral thrush frequently the GP may recommend blood tests. The tests will look for certain conditions linked to oral thrush, such as [diabetes](#) and nutritional deficiencies.

More information is available at the following website

- NHS website - www.nhs.uk
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

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