



Breast and nipple thrush

You can get thrush on different parts of your body. Thrush is a yeast infection caused by the fungus called *Candida albicans*. Breast and nipple thrush can be painful. You can get help so you can keep breastfeeding.

Do you have breast or nipple pain?

If you have breast or nipple pain, talk to your:

- midwife
- lactation consultant
- maternal and child health nurse.

They can help you with diagnosis and treatment. You should get help early so you can keep breastfeeding.

What causes breast and nipple thrush?

We don't always know what causes breast and nipple thrush. Sometimes it is because you might have:

- had vaginal thrush
- been using antibiotics
- nipple damage.

Pain when you have nipple thrush

You might feel mild or severe pain in your nipples. You might feel:

- burning
- itching
- stinging.

The pain usually keeps going and doesn't get better if you change breastfeeding position.

Your nipples might be tender to touch. Even light clothing can cause pain.

What does nipple thrush look like?

You might not have obvious signs of thrush on your nipples. However, you might find:

- your nipple looks bright pink
- your areola might be red, dry or flaky
- a fine white rash on your breast
- nipple damage, like a crack, which takes a long time to get better.

Thrush in your baby's mouth or bottom

You might find signs of thrush your baby's mouth or on your baby's bottom:

- your baby's mouth might have a thick white coating on the tongue and/or the inside their cheeks
- your baby's bottom might have a bright red rash with spots around it.

Pain when you have breast thrush

You might feel pain in one or both of your breasts. You might feel:

- stabbing or shooting pain
- a deep ache
- a burning feeling that spreads across your breast.

You might feel the pain:

- straight after breastfeeding.
- between feeds.

Treatment

If you or your baby get diagnosed with thrush you will both need antifungal treatment.

Make sure you keep any medicine in a safe place away from children.

Treatment for you

Your doctor will give you a prescription for antifungal cream or gel such as miconazole oral gel or cream, or nystatin cream.

Your doctor will tell you how to use the gel or cream. You should:

- put the gel or cream on both nipples every time you finish breastfeeding during the day, for at least seven days
- only use a thin amount of gel or cream. You do not need to wipe it off before breastfeeding
- keep your nipples dry.

Change your breast pads often because thrush grows well in a moist warm environment.

Your doctor might also give you a prescription for antifungal tablets. Your doctor will tell you how to take the tablets.

Treatment for your baby

Your doctor might give a prescription for:

- gel or drops for your baby's mouth.
- cream for your baby's bottom.

Your doctor will tell you how to use the gel or drops or cream. Make sure you follow the instructions.

Miconazole oral gel for baby

If you are using miconazole oral gel:

- use the spoon from the packet to measure how much gel you need
- use a clean finger to spread the gel inside your baby's cheeks and over their tongue
- use the gel four times a day after you feed your baby
- after one week, use the gel once a day for another one or two weeks.

Nystatin oral drops

You could use nystatin oral drops if:

- you don't want to use miconazole gel
- you can't get miconazole from your pharmacy or another pharmacy

If you are using nystatin oral drops:

- use the dropper in the packet to put 1 ml in your baby's mouth
- use the drops four times a day for one week.
- after one week, use the drops once a day for another one or two weeks.

What else can you do?

To stop thrush from spreading, you should wash your hands thoroughly:

- after nappy changes
- before and after applying any creams or lotions.

If you are using teats or dummies, clean them thoroughly after use and boil them for five minutes. You should replace teats and dummies weekly if possible.

You should wash things like towels, bras, cloth nursing pads in hot soapy water and let them air-dry outside.

You should get treatment for any fungal infections for anyone in your family. For example, if someone in your family gets:

- vaginal thrush
- nappy rash
- a fungal infection on their feet.

Can you use gentian violet?

Some people use gentian violet for nipple thrush. Gentian violet is a purple antifungal and antibacterial dye that you can use for fungal infections like thrush.

You will need a prescription to get gentian violet. Not all pharmacies have gentian violet.

Be careful because gentian violet might:

- dye or stain things like the bathroom basin
- temporarily stain your skin and clothes
- make your skin irritated.

If you are using gentian violet:

- use a cotton bud to put it on your nipples twice a day after breastfeeding
- use it for three to four days
- do not use it for more than seven days.

Do not use gentian violet if you:

- are sensitive or have a reaction to it
- have ulcerated, open or broken wounds on your breasts, like cracked nipples.

Do not use gentian violet near your eyes.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



If you need an interpreter, you can ask for one.

For more information

Your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse

Maternal and Child Health Line

You can call any time of day or night.

13 22 29

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Breastfeeding Helpline

1800 686 268

breastfeeding.asn.au