



# Vaginal Thrush

Patient information leaflet



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Common Ailments Service

**Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your condition.**

Vaginal thrush is a common infection caused by a yeast (fungus). It is usually harmless and the symptoms include:

- itching and soreness around the vagina
- itching inside the vagina
- a discharge from the vagina that does not smell (usually thick and white like cottage cheese, but sometimes watery)
- soreness during sex or when you pee

The yeast that causes vaginal thrush is called *Candida*. It usually lives in the vagina and on the skin around it in small amounts without causing problems. *Candida* grows in warm, moist conditions. Thrush sometimes develops if the *Candida* grows too much.

You are more likely to get vaginal thrush if you:

- are taking antibiotics
- have poorly controlled diabetes
- are pregnant
- have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- have irritated or damaged skin
- are having hormone replacement therapy (HRT)



## Treatment and Prevention

You will usually need an antifungal medicine to get rid of thrush. There are a few different treatment options. Some you insert into your vagina or put on the skin around it; others you take by mouth. Your partner will not need treatment unless they have symptoms. If you have thrush, it's best to avoid having sex until you've completed a course of treatment and the infection has cleared up.

### Medicines that can help

**These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you.**

**Fluconazole and clotrimazole** are antifungal medicines that work by killing the yeast that causes thrush.

**Fluconazole** is a 150mg capsule that you take by mouth at any time of day, either before or after a meal. You will usually only need 1 dose.



## Treatment and Prevention

**Clotrimazole** comes as high strength 10% cream or a 500mg pessary that you put inside your vagina at night. You will only need 1 dose. A pessary is a solid tablet that dissolves once it is inside your vagina.

Your pharmacy may sell lower-strength clotrimazole pessaries, but you cannot get them through the Choose Pharmacy scheme.

Avoid using pessaries during your period as they might not stay in your vagina long enough to work properly.

If you have sore and itchy skin just outside the vagina, your pharmacist may advise you to use **clotrimazole** 1% or 2% cream on this area, along with another antifungal medicine.

Your treatment will take 7 to 14 days to work. If you have sex during this time, be aware that antifungal creams can damage condoms and diaphragms. This means your contraception might not work. Use other methods of contraception for at least 5 days after using these products.

Do not apply complementary therapies such as yoghurt, probiotics, tea tree or other essential oils to your vagina or the area around it.

### **Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.**

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).

### **To stop vaginal thrush coming back:**

- use water and an emollient (like E45 cream) instead of soap to wash the affected area, and dry properly
- avoid rinsing out (douching) your vagina
- avoid bubble baths, scented soaps and spermicides - these can allow more Candida to grow
- wear cotton underwear and do not wear nylon underwear or tight-fitting clothing too often
- avoid using biological washing powder and fabric conditioners when washing your underwear
- make sure your vagina is well lubricated when having sex - use a lubricant if you need to, and dry yourself afterwards



## When to Get Help

### Contact your GP if you:

- are peeing more than usual
- have had vaginal thrush more than twice in 12 months
- feel unwell in addition to the vaginal and vulval symptoms
- have used a vaginal thrush treatment, but it has not worked after 7 days
- have a discharge that smells
- have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- have diabetes and have problems managing your sugar level
- have blisters or sores close to your vagina
- have ever had a sexually transmitted infection (or your partner has) and you think it might have come back
- have pain in your lower tummy
- have bleeding from your vagina when you are not having your period

**If you are worried that your condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.**



## More information

For more information on vaginal thrush or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/t/article/thrushinmenandwomen>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/sexual-health/vaginal-discharge-female-discharge/vaginal-thrush-yeast-infection>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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