



Yeast infection (Candidiasis)

Candida can normally be found on the skin and in the mouth, throat, intestinal tract, and vagina of healthy people. In children, yeast infections are commonly found in the mouth or throat (thrush) or the diaper area.

School health and childcare provider information

Cause

Various species of *Candida* fungus, especially *Candida albicans*.

Symptoms

Thrush – White, slightly raised patches on the tongue, gums, roof of the mouth, throat, or inside the cheek.

Diaper rash – Smooth, shiny "fire engine" red rash with a raised border. Children who suck their thumbs or fingers may occasionally develop *Candida* infections around their fingernails.

Under certain conditions, such as during antibiotic use or when skin is damaged and exposed to excessive moisture, the balance of the normal, healthy skin germs is upset. Therefore, yeast that normally live on the skin can overgrow and cause yeast infections. Most of the time these infections heal quickly, but sometimes illness can occur in infants, persons with weakened immune systems, or those taking certain antibiotics.

Spread

Rarely person-to-person, but may happen by contact with skin lesions and mouth secretions of infected persons or asymptomatic carriers. Most infants who have *Candida* got it from their mother during childbirth.

Outbreaks of thrush in childcare settings may be the result of increased use of antibiotics rather than newly acquired *Candida* infections.

Incubation

Variable. For thrush in infants, it usually takes 2 to 5 days. For others, yeast infections may occur while taking antibiotics or shortly after stopping the antibiotics.

Contagious period

Contagious while lesions are present. Most infections occur from yeast in the person's own body.

Yeast

Diagnosis

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider to identify the fungus.

Typically, healthcare providers will diagnose via physical examination. However, sometimes a sample may be taken and sent to a laboratory for testing to identify the fungus.

Exclusion

Childcare and school

None.

Treatment

Topical or oral anti-fungal medication may be prescribed.

Antifungal medication for mild/moderate oral infections is typically applied for 7 to 14 days. More serious infections are most commonly treated with fluconazole.

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with secretions from the mouth or nose or the skin in the diaper area. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- Minimize contact with secretions from the nose or mouth of infected persons.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).
- Clean and sanitize bottle nipples and pacifiers daily (see Section 2).
- Recommend parents/guardians replace bottle nipples and pacifiers after treatment.
- Do not share mouthed toys or objects.
- For diaper rash, keeping the skin dry and reducing irritation caused by friction makes yeast infections less likely. Frequent diaper changes, air exposure, and avoiding rubbing of material against the skin may help.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

Hennepin County Public Health
Epidemiology
612-543-5230
epi-envhlth@hennepin.us

Updated June 14, 2024

