

Fungal infections

A fungal infection, also called a yeast infection or thrush, can form on your nipples or in your breast because it thrives on milk. The infection forms from an overgrowth of the *Candida* organism. *Candida* exists in our bodies and is kept at healthy levels by the natural bacteria in our bodies. When the natural balance of bacteria is upset, *Candida* can overgrow, causing an infection.

A key sign of a fungal infection is if you develop sore nipples that last more than a few days, even after you make sure your baby has a good latch. Or, you may suddenly get sore nipples after several weeks of pain-free breastfeeding. Some other signs of a fungal infection include pink, flaky, shiny, itchy or cracked nipples, or deep pink and blistered nipples. You also could have achy breasts or shooting pains deep in the breast during or after feedings.

Causes of thrush include:

- Thrush in your baby's mouth, which can pass to you
- An overly moist environment on your skin or nipples that are sore or cracked
- [Antibiotics](#) or steroids
- A chronic illness like [HIV](#), [diabetes](#), or [anemia](#)

Thrush in a baby's mouth appears as little white spots on the inside of the cheeks, gums, or tongue. Many babies with thrush refuse to nurse, or are gassy or cranky. A baby's fungal infection can also appear as a diaper rash that looks like small red dots around a main rash. This rash will not go away by using regular diaper rash creams.

What you can do

Fungal infections may take several weeks to cure, so it is important to follow these tips to avoid spreading the infection:

1. Change disposable nursing pads often.
2. Wash any towels or clothing that comes in contact with the yeast in very hot water (above 122°F).
3. Wear a clean bra every day.
4. Wash your hands often, and wash your baby's hands often — especially if he or she sucks on his or her fingers.
5. Put pacifiers, bottle nipples, or toys your baby puts in his or her mouth in a pot of water and bring it to a roaring boil daily. After one week of treatment, discard pacifiers and nipples and buy new ones.
6. Boil daily all breast pump parts that touch the milk.
7. Make sure other family members are free of thrush or other fungal infections. If they have symptoms, make sure they get treated.