



London Health Sciences Centre

Patient Information

YEAST OVERGROWTH

Yeast is normally found on the skin and mucous membranes of all people. An overgrowth of yeast can be uncomfortable. Yeast is easily transferred from one person to another.

Mothers/infants may be at risk if they:

- Have a history of yeast infections
- Have received antibiotics/steroids
- Have nipple trauma.
- Have has a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) admission
- Have diabetes

Sign and Symptoms of Yeast Overgrowth:

Either you or your baby (babies) may be symptom free. However, both (or all) of you need to be treated at the same time to prevent passing this condition back and forth. Other family members including partners may also require treatment.

Mother:	Baby:
Nipples/areolas may be pinker, shiny, have white patches or be swollen and cracked and feel itchy or burning. Skin may breakdown and bleed.	Mouth may have white patches (thrush) and be sore. Baby may refuse, bite down or frequently pull off the breast.
Breasts may feel itchy, burning, or have a shooting pain that continues after breastfeeding.	Diaper area may have a rash that is red, shiny, and pinpoint or skin may peel or bleed. Baby's rash may worsen before getting better while treating.
May have vaginal discharge-patchy white plaques and a burning itch	Increased fussiness and gassiness.

If you think you or your baby have yeast overgrowth problems, talk to your health care provider right away. Let them know you are breastfeeding and they can help you find the best treatment plan for you and your baby.

Management for the Mother:

- Continue breastfeeding.
- Wash hands carefully with soap and water (avoid antibacterial soap) before and after feeding, diaper changes, etc.
- Use any antifungal medication as directed by your health care provider.
- Leave your bra flaps open for a period of time after feeding/milk expression.
- Change bra at least daily.
- Change breast pads whenever damp.
- Many mothers have found it helpful to alter their diet by: reducing sugar, artificial sweeteners, yeast, refined starch, fermented foods (ie wine, beer, aged cheese, and vinegar), dairy products, peanuts, peanut butter, grapes, melons, dried fruit and fruit juices.
- Eat yogurt with active live cultures or acidophilus capsules. Add garlic to your diet.

Management for the Baby:

- Continue breastfeeding.
- Consider an antifungal medication as advised by a health care provider who is skilled in helping breastfeeding mothers.

- Consider an herbal preparation. Talk to your health care provider or someone trained in herbals such as a registered herbalist. Be sure to begin with an herbal preparation in its mildest form. Please see the handout called *Herbal Use While Breastfeeding*.
- If using a dropper for medication or vitamins, replace the product since it may contain yeast.
- When treatment for yeast begins, avoid placing dropper in baby's mouth and returning it to the container. Give the medication/vitamin by an alternative method such as by spoon.

Management for the Household:

- Clean diaper changing surfaces with a mild bleach and water solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach) or a solution of water and grapefruit seed extract (combine 5-10 drops of citricidal liquid GSE to 1 ounce (30ml) of distilled water).
- Sanitize any infant feeding equipment, breast pump parts, toys or any object that goes into baby's mouth after each use. It is recommended to boil items for 20 minutes once every 24 hours. If baby in NICU refer to Pumping babies in the NICU.
- Wash any clothing (towels, bras, etc) that comes in contact with breastmilk with hot soapy water, rinse and dry well. Consider using 15-20 drops of grapefruit seed extract to the rinse water of the wash.
- If you are expressing breastmilk for later use, talk to your health care provider.

*Combining treatments are often necessary to treat yeast overgrowth.

*Continue treating the yeast overgrowth as recommended even if symptoms improve or disappear.

Prevention:

- Proper hand washing with soap and water; avoid antibacterial products.
- Ensure comfortable position and latch.
- Change breast pads whenever damp.
- Change baby's diaper frequently.
- Eat foods low in sugar, starch.
- Ensure any equipment in contact with breastmilk is cleaned thoroughly and frequently.
- Make sure you dry yourself and baby well after washing
- Avoid dressing too warmly which may cause overheating.

Babies in NICU or Special Care Nurseries:

- Continue to bring in freshly expressed breastmilk.
- If you are being treated for yeast or are symptomatic, sanitize your breast pump kits after each use while in hospital and at home.
- Never treat your baby with an herbal remedy without speaking with your baby's health care provider in the NICU or special care nursery.
- If you are being treated for yeast overgrowth, be sure to inform your NICU Team
- including the Lactation Consultant

References:

- 1) Dennis, Christine, RH, MNIMH, MSc (Herb.Med.). Personal communication. January 27, 2017.
- 2) Dr. Jay Gordon - information on GSE <http://drjaygordon.com/breastfeeding/thrush.html>
- 3) Hale, T. (2019). Medications & Mother's Milk 2019. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- 4) Martin, H. (2015). Grapefruit Seed Extract Uses. Retrieved from <http://www.livestrong.com/article/127592-grapefruit-seed-extract-uses/>
- 5) Wambach, K. (2016). Breast-Related Problems. In K. Wambach & J. Riordan (Eds.), Breastfeeding and human lactation (pp. 319-357). Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Developed by Middlesex London Elgin Breastfeeding Coalition May 2017. Currently revised by the Breastfeeding Coalition of Southwestern Ontario with representation from Chatham Kent Health Alliance, London Health Sciences Centre, Middlesex London Health Unit, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital, St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, and Southwestern Public Health St. Thomas, November 2019.