

Oral thrush

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any forthcoming treatment and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other questions that the leaflet does not answer or would like further explanation please ask.

What is oral thrush?

Oral thrush is a fungal infection in the mouth caused by a group of yeasts called *Candida*. Most people have low levels of candida in their mouths. Oral thrush is not contagious.

What are the symptoms of oral thrush?

- White patches which can often be wiped away leaving red patches which may bleed.
- Loss of taste.
- Unpleasant taste in the mouth.
- Redness inside the mouth and throat.
- Cracks at the corners of the mouth.
- A painful, burning sensation in the mouth.
- For some patients oral thrush can make it difficult for a patient to eat and drink

What causes oral thrush?

- Antibiotics.
- Asthma inhalers.
- Dentures, especially ill-fitting sets, wearing dentures at night and old sets of dentures.
- Poor oral hygiene.
- Dry mouth.
- Medication.
- Smoking.
- Chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
- Underlying conditions such as diabetes, iron or vitamin B12 deficiency, underactive thyroid and HIV.

Treating oral thrush

Oral thrush can be treated by using anti-fungal medications. These may come in gel, liquid, capsule or tablet form.

If your medication is thought to have caused your oral thrush then you may need to have the dose or way the medicine is administered changed. The doctor will discuss this with you at your appointment.

If an underlying condition is suspected, you may be sent for blood tests.

Preventing oral thrush

The following can help reduce the chance of oral thrush:

- Rinsing your mouth after meals.
- Rinsing your mouth after using inhalers.
- Good oral hygiene.
- Regular dental check-ups even if you wear dentures.
- Remove your dentures at night. Clean with toothpaste and soak overnight in a denture solution.
- If you wear dentures, brush your gums and tongue with a soft toothbrush twice a day.
- If you smoke, stop smoking. Leaflets to help with smoking cessation can be found in the waiting room.
- If you use a corticosteroid inhaler, rinse your mouth out after using or consider using a spacer.
- Ensure that any underlying condition you have, such as diabetes, is well controlled.

Useful website

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Oral-thrush---adults/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Contact us

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Further information

Visit the Trust website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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