

Auckland Sexual Health Service
Free phone 0800 739 432

What is candidiasis?

This condition, often known as thrush, is caused by an overgrowth of, or an allergic reaction to a yeast called *Candida albicans*. This yeast is usually found in many areas of the body and is not considered to be a sexually transmissible infection. Candidiasis is very common. A range of factors may possibly trigger an attack of candidiasis although often there is no obvious cause.

These factors include:

- Antibiotic treatment.
- Medical conditions such as diabetes.
- Pregnancy.
- Skin conditions such as eczema or dermatitis.
- Conditions that affect the immune system such as HIV.
- Tight clothing that promotes excessive sweating, e.g. wetsuits, synthetic underwear.

How do I know if I've got candidiasis?

For women symptoms may include genital itching, irritation or burning and/or an abnormal vaginal discharge. Men may have itching and redness, on the head of the penis (a condition known as balanitis). Some men find symptoms are more noticeable after sex. Sometimes the itching is located in the groin.

What is the treatment?

Candidiasis may be treated with antifungal creams or pessaries (tablets that are inserted into the vagina) or oral tablets. People with recurrent or ongoing candidiasis may require longer term treatment.

Will sexual partners need treatment?

Candidiasis is not usually sexually transmitted so partners don't normally require treatment. However if a partner has symptoms they should be treated.

How can a person help prevent recurrent candidiasis?

Some people appear to be more susceptible to candidiasis. The best way to avoid recurrences is to identify what triggers the condition. The problem should be discussed with a doctor who may investigate and manage any underlying condition. Some of the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Wear loose cotton underwear and avoid tight clothing. For women this is important when wearing pantyhose or tights.
- Uncircumcised men should wash and dry under their foreskin daily.
- Wash genital skin with water only or a soap substitute such as aqueous cream.
- Avoid use of deodorants, talcum powder on genital skin.
- Avoid deodorised panty shields, bubble bath solutions, or vaginal douches.
- Avoid spermicidal condoms and use only water-based lubricants such as wet stuff.
- Request candidiasis treatment when prescribed antibiotics.