

# Thrush

**What is it?**  
**How is it transmitted?**  
**How is it treated?**

A service provided by

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## **What is thrush?**

Thrush is an infection caused by a yeast-like fungus. Many women have the fungus in their vagina without it causing any symptoms, as vaginal secretions and 'friendly' bacteria keep the fungus under control. Problems can arise when the natural balance in the vagina is upset and the fungus multiplies.

Thrush isn't a sexually transmitted infection, but it can sometimes be passed on during sex. Thrush can sometimes be triggered by sex.

## **How is thrush transmitted?**

It is possible for thrush to be passed on through sex, although this is uncommon.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of thrush?**

Typical symptoms include:

- itching and soreness around the entrance of the vagina
- a stinging sensation when you pass urine
- pain during sex
- vaginal discharge - which might have no smell and be thin and watery, or smell like yeast and be thick and white like cottage cheese

As well as the above there may be more severe symptoms:

- vagina and vulva red and swollen
- cracked skin around the entrance of your vagina
- sores in the surrounding area – rare, but it may indicate the presence of another STI

## **What is the test for thrush?**

Female patients will have an internal vaginal examination, a swab will be taken of the vaginal fluid and analysed in the laboratory. If you've had vaginal thrush diagnosed before and you recognise the symptoms, anti-thrush medication can be bought from a pharmacy.

## **What is the treatment for thrush?**

In most cases, thrush can be easily treated with either anti-thrush pessaries, which are inserted into the vagina, or a tablet that is swallowed. Anti-thrush creams are also available, which are put on the skin around the vagina, easing soreness and itching.

**Please note: Sexual Health Sheffield can no longer treat recurrent or chronic thrush. Please see your GP if this applies to you.**

## **What happens if thrush is not treated?**

There are no long term health consequences. Thrush often goes away on its own.

## **Is there anything I can do to help myself?**

- Some women find that bathing the genital area with diluted tea tree oil gel or using live plain yoghurt on the vaginal area help relieve the symptoms of vaginal thrush
- Try to avoid wearing tight clothes around the genital area
- Use lube (lubricants) during sex
- Try and avoid perfumed soap, bubble bath, genital sprays and deodorants etc
- If you know you get thrush from being on antibiotics, let your doctor know, then you can get treatment for thrush at the same time

## **Can I still have sex?**

Sex may be painful so you may want to avoid it. Thrush can be passed on during sex - using condoms should help avoid this.

## **How can I protect myself from sexually transmitted infections?**

The following measures can help to protect you from thrush and from sexually transmitted infections, such as genital warts, chlamydia and gonorrhoea. If you have a sexually transmitted infection they will also help prevent you from passing it on to your partner(s):

- Use condoms every time you have vaginal or anal sex
- If you have oral sex, use a condom to cover the penis, or a dam to cover the anus or female genitals
- Any genital to genital contact between partners could pass on STIs. Using dams or condoms before sexual contact can prevent infection

- If you are not sure how to use condoms correctly visit **[www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk)**
- Avoid sharing sex toys. If you do share them, wash them or cover them with a new condom before anyone else uses them
- Arrange regular HIV/STI check-ups, especially at change/start of relationships with new sexual partners

## **What happens at Sexual Health Sheffield?**

When you attend for your appointment, you will be asked to provide the following:

- Your name and how we can contact you - any details you provide will be treated confidentially
- During your visit you will be asked personal information so we can provide the relevant and appropriate care
- We have a duty of care to all our patients, so if you are 17 or under you will be asked relevant questions to assess your safety. If staff are concerned, they may talk to you about what to do about this and may contact other appropriate agencies. Sexual Health Sheffield will not tell your parents or carers that you have visited Sexual Health Sheffield

This is the service you can expect when you attend Sexual Health Sheffield:

- All advice, information, tests, condoms and treatments are free at Sexual Health Sheffield
- No one should judge you because of your sexual behaviour or lifestyle
- All our services are confidential
- All Sexual Health Sheffield workers are appropriately and fully trained NHS staff

- All tests are optional; no examination will take place without your permission
- Please ask questions to ensure you fully understand what services have been offered, what tests carried out and what treatments given
- You can have a chaperone to help you feel more comfortable – please ask
- Our friendly and professional staff are here to help you. We will give you as much support as you need (particularly if you need help on how to inform any partners)

If you feel that we have not met the above or want to give us any other feedback, please contact us via:

[www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think](http://www.sth.nhs.uk/patients/tell-us-what-you-think)

## **Further information**

[www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk)

0114 226 8888

NHS Choices website:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/Sexually-transmitted-infections/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Sexually-transmitted-infections/Pages/Introduction.aspx)



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