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Thrush

Transmission, Signs and Symptoms, Treatment, Prevention

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What is it?

Thrush is a fungal condition called monilia or candida albicans. It is caused by overgrowth of the yeast candid albicans. The organism is often found in the body without causing disease and is not harmful. It may become evident:

- during sex;
- during pregnancy;
- during the use of antibiotics or other medication; or
- in diabetic people.

Transmission:

Although thrush is not usually acquired from sexual intercourse it can infect a male partner who can re-infect the female during sex. Thrush can live under the skin of a uncircumcised penis.

Signs and Symptoms:

The usual symptoms are:

- itchiness of the genital area;
- soreness of the vagina;
- a cheesy white discharge from the vagina; and
- discomfort during intercourse and or pain when urinating.

Treatment:

Prescribed vaginal or oral medications are very effective treatments. The following may help to make the vagina less favourable to thrush or help to smooth the irritation but they are not cures. An external genital wash or medications are very effective treatments, but are not cures. The following may help:

- an external genital wash of weak vinegar solution, (1 teaspoon per cup) or bicarbonate of soda, (1 teaspoon per litre of water);
- a hand full of raw salt in the bath water;
- inserting acidophilus yogurt in the vagina; and
- Use of Acigel available from your chemist.

Prevention:

The following points may help to avoid an infection:

- Wear loose clothing as tight clothing promotes excessive sweating and makes it easier for the candida fungus to invade surfaces;
- wear cotton or silk underwear instead of polyester;
- after urinating wipe from front (Vagina) to back (anus) to avoid infection of the vagina;
- avoid excess use of soap; and
- it is not advisable to have sex during a severe attack.

Thrush causes swelling of the genitals and sexual stimulation will increase the swelling, bringing discomfort, while the natural lubrications produced are alkaline and may aggravate the problem.

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