

**Information for Inuit Community Members**  
**Fact Sheet 2 HIV/AIDS-Related Illnesses**



## **THRUSH** (Candida)

### **What is thrush?**

Thrush is an infection that people with HIV/AIDS often get. It is caused by a germ called Candida. Everyone, even people without HIV/AIDS, has small amounts of Candida living inside their mouth and stomach and on their skin. It is not usually a problem unless your immune system is made weak by HIV/AIDS. When your immune system is weak, thrush (Candida) can grow out of control.

### **What thrush looks like**

When Candida grows it usually looks like white patches on the tongue or in other parts of the mouth. These white patches can be easily scraped off but underneath them are reddish sore spots. Thrush can also cause cracks and red sores at the corners of the mouth that can be painful. It can also make food less tasty.

### **What you can do about thrush**

If you notice white patches on your tongue or inside your mouth, show them to your doctor, nurse or CHR. They can look at the patches or sores and see if they are caused by Candida or thrush. Sometimes the doctor may scrape off some of the white patch to look at it more closely under a microscope.

Once the doctor is sure that you have thrush, he or she can give you medication to fight it and keep it under control. It is important that you take your medication exactly the way the doctor tells you.



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**Common questions people ask about thrush (Candida):**

**Q: Do you use the same medicine for thrush in your mouth as you use for thrush on your skin?**

**A:** It depends on the medicine. Sometimes your doctor will give you some medication for the fungus in your mouth that is a pill you swallow. By taking this medication as you are told to do, the pill can also make the fungus on your skin go away.

**Q: My doctor says that I have thrush and has given me some medication which I am taking. How long will it take for the thrush to go away?**

**A:** Thrush can take anywhere from 1 to 2 weeks to go away. Be patient and be sure to take your medicine the way it was explained to you. If it has not gone away after 4 weeks, go back to the health centre and have the doctor, nurse or CHR look at it again.

**Q: How can I prevent thrush?**

**A:** Everyone has small amounts of Candida in or on our bodies so you can't get rid of it, but there are some things you can do to help keep it under control:

- ◆ rinse your mouth by swishing with water after eating
- ◆ brush your teeth after you eat
- ◆ cut out or eat less food that has lots of sugar in it, like candy or pop



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**Q: Is thrush like a yeast infection?**

**A:** Yes, it is caused by a germ like the one that causes vaginal yeast infections.

**Q: Do both men and women get thrush?**

**A:** Yes, both men and women get thrush. Women may be more likely to get it than men.

**Q: Is it only people who have HIV/AIDS that get thrush?**

**A:** No, anyone who has a weaker immune system can get thrush. Just because you have thrush does not mean you have HIV or AIDS. Sometimes people get a bit of thrush when they take antibiotics like penicillin.

**Credits**

Writers: Todd Armstrong and Sean Hosein Editor: RonniLyn Pustil

*This is one of a series of information updates for Inuit community members to learn more about the medicines and other kinds of treatments some people with HIV/AIDS use to fight HIV and AIDS. If you have questions or want more information, talk to your doctor, nurse or CHR.*

Prepared in partnership by CATIE and CIHAN 2001

