

## • candidiasis

Oral candidiasis, also known as **thrush**, causes white, curd-like patches in the mouth or throat. These patches typically appear on the tongue, inside of the cheeks, or on the palate. Oral candidiasis typically occurs in people with abnormal immune systems. These can include people undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, people taking immunosuppressive drugs to protect transplanted organs, or people with HIV infection.

Candidiasis is caused by a yeast-like fungus, **C. albicans**, which causes an inflammatory, pruritic infection characterized by a thick, white discharge. Acute lesions appear as diffuse, curly or velvety white mucosal plaques on the cheeks, palate, and tongue that can be **wiped off**, leaving a red, raw or bleeding surface. **Note:** Chronic lesions are **erythematous**.

This yeast-like fungus is a normal inhabitant of the oral cavity and vaginal tract, however it is normally held in check by the indigenous bacteria of these areas. The treatment for oral candidiasis is topical through the use of lozenges (*also called troches*) and mouth rinses, the most widely used is **nystatin**. **Note:** Systemic treatment includes the use of fluconazole or ketoconazole.



1. **Acute pseudomembranous** candidiasis is the most common form of oral candidiasis and is usually found on the buccal mucosa, tongue, and soft palate. **Oral cytology** smears are useful for a diagnosis (*it will reveal budding organisms with branching pseudohyphae*).
2. **Angular cheilitis** (*Perleche*) has also been linked to *C. albicans*.
3. Factors that may **stimulate** *Candida* growth include: the extended use of antibiotics, steroids, diabetes, pregnancy, or a deficiency in iron, folate, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> or zinc.