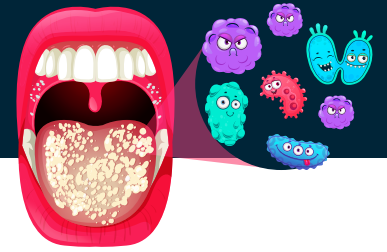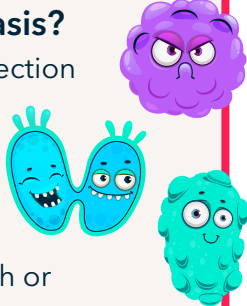# Oral Candidiasis

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is oral candidiasis?

Oral candidiasis is an infection in the mouth or throat caused by Candida, a yeast-like fungus. It is also commonly referred to as thrush. Thrush usually appears as whitish or yellowish patches on the tongue or inside the cheeks.

Who can get thrush?

- Healthy newborn babies and infants
- People who wear dentures
- People who have dry mouth—this is more common for older people
- People who have certain diseases, e.g., diabetes mellitus, leukemia, hypothyroidism and HIV/AIDS
- People who take certain medications, e.g., antibiotics, corticosteroids
- People who have had chemotherapy or radiation therapy

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THRUSH?

- Brush your teeth and tongue twice daily, floss your teeth at least once daily, and have your teeth cleaned at your dentist's office twice yearly.
- If you have dry mouth, see your health-care provider for advice. Taking frequent sips of water or sucking on ice chips or sugar-free lozenges may also help.
- Don't use a mouthwash that contains a lot of alcohol. If you use a mouthwash that contains alcohol over a long period of time, it can cause your mouth to become dry.

- If you wear dental appliances or dentures, take them out at night and disinfect them.
- If you use an inhaled corticosteroid, rinse your mouth with water after using it. Ask your pharmacist about using a spacer with your inhaler. A spacer can help decrease the chance of getting thrush.
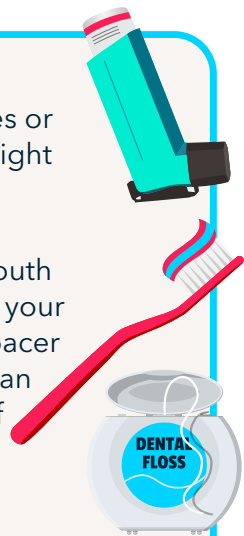
What should you do if you have thrush?

- See your health-care provider. You will need medication to treat this infection. A liquid antifungal medicine, nystatin, is commonly used.
- Swish and swallow the recommended dose of medicine. Try to keep it in your mouth as long as possible before swallowing. Avoid food and drink for 5–10 minutes after.
- You should see improvement after 48–72 hours. You should continue taking nystatin for a few days after the thrush has cleared to prevent it from returning.
- When the infection has cleared up, throw out your old toothbrush and start using a new one.