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## Candida

Candida is the name for a group of yeasts (a type of fungus) that commonly infect the skin. The name 'candida' refers to the white colour of the organisms in culture. Candidal infection is known as 'candidiasis', 'candidosis' or 'moniliasis'.

Candida depends on a living host for survival. It is a normal inhabitant of the human digestive tract from early infancy, where it lives without causing any disease most of the time. However, if the host's defences are lowered, the organism can cause infection of the mucosa (the lining of the mouth, anus and genitals), the skin, and rarely, deep-seated infection.

The most common Candida (C) species to result in candidiasis is *C. albicans*. Other species are:

- *C. tropicalis*
- *C. parapsilosis*
- *C. glabrata*
- *C. guilliermondii*

Candidal skin infections include

- [Oral candidiasis](#) (oral thrush)
- [Vulvovaginal candidiasis](#) (genital infection in women) including [cyclic vulvovaginitis](#)
- [Balanitis](#) (penile infection)
- [Intertrigo](#) (skin fold infections)
- [Napkin dermatitis](#) (nappy or diaper rash)
- [Chronic paronychia](#) (nail fold infection)
- [Onychomycosis](#) (nail plate infection)
- [Chronic mucocutaneous candidiasis](#)

### Candida skin problems



Candidal nail infection



Superficial peeling from candida infection



Erosio interdigitalis blastomycetica



Intertrigo



Inflammatory candida causing pustules



Close-up of rash caused by candida

## Predisposing factors for candida infection

- Infancy or old age
- Warm climate
- Occlusion e.g. plastic pants (babies), nylon pantyhose (women), dental plates
- Immune deficiencies e.g. low levels of immunoglobulins, infection with [human immunodeficiency virus \(HIV\)](#)
- Broad spectrum antibiotic treatment
- Contraceptive pill or injection, or pregnancy
- Chemotherapy or immunosuppressive medications such as [systemic steroids](#)
- Diabetes mellitus, [Cushing's syndrome](#) and other endocrine conditions
- Iron deficiency
- General debility e.g. from cancer or malnutrition
- Underlying skin disease e.g. [psoriasis](#), [lichen planus](#)

## Diagnosis

Microscopy and culture of skin swabs and scrapings aid in the diagnosis of candidal infections. However, candida can live on a mucosal surface quite harmlessly. It may also secondarily infect an underlying skin disorder such as [psoriasis](#).

If you have a candida infection, consult your doctor or [dermatologist](#) for an examination and advice.

### Related information

#### On DermNet NZ:

- [Introduction to fungal infections](#)
- [Laboratory tests for fungal infection](#)
- [Treatment of fungal infections](#)

#### Books about skin diseases:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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