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Clotrimazole for vaginal thrush (Canesten)

Clotrimazole is an antifungal medicine.

Side-effects are unlikely but may include mild skin irritation or itching.

If your symptoms do not improve within seven days, speak with your doctor.

Do not use more than two courses of clotrimazole within six months without speaking with a doctor for further advice.

About clotrimazole for thrush

Type of medicine	An antifungal medicine
Used for	Vaginal thrush
Also called	Canesten®
Available as	Cream, intravaginal (internal) cream, pessary, and as combination packs

Many women have an occasional bout of [vaginal thrush](#). It is due to an infection with a yeast fungus called *Candida* spp. Most cases of thrush are caused by the yeast called *Candida albicans* but other types of *Candida* spp. can also cause thrush. Common symptoms of vaginal thrush are itching, soreness, and redness around the outside of the vagina and a thick, creamy white, odourless vaginal discharge. Clotrimazole works by killing the yeast fungus causing the infection.

Clotrimazole is usually applied in two ways to treat thrush. A pessary or internal (intravaginal) cream is inserted high into the vagina to treat the infection. Then a cream (usually containing 2% clotrimazole) is applied around the outside of the vagina to relieve the itching and soreness. Many of the products available are 'combi' packs - these contain either a pessary or internal cream, and also a cream for external use. Clotrimazole is available on prescription and you can also buy it at a pharmacy, without a prescription, if you have previously been diagnosed by your doctor as having vaginal thrush.

A lower strength of clotrimazole cream is used to treat other fungal skin infections. There is a separate medicine leaflet called [Clotrimazole for fungal skin infections](#) which gives more information about this.

Before using clotrimazole for thrush

To make sure this is the right treatment for you, before you start using clotrimazole for thrush make sure your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you are pregnant. This is because you should only use medicines on the recommendation of a doctor while you are expecting a baby. Also, you may need to use clotrimazole for a longer period of time during pregnancy than is usually recommended.
- If you are under 16 or over 60 years of age.
- If you have had more than two episodes of thrush in six months.
- If you have a foul-smelling or blood-stained vaginal discharge, or if you have blisters or sores in the vaginal area.
- If you are in pain, feel sick, or have diarrhoea or a fever.
- If you have previously had a sexually transmitted infection, or if you have had a partner with a sexually transmitted infection.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are using or taking any other medicines. This includes medicines which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.

How to use clotrimazole for thrush

- Before starting this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about how to use the clotrimazole preparation you have been given.
- If you are using **clotrimazole cream**, apply the cream to the area around the outside of your vagina and back passage two or three times daily. Rub it in gently. Continue to use the cream until the itching and soreness due to the infection are gone.
- If you are using **clotrimazole intravaginal cream** (for example, Canesten 10% VC® or Canesten® Internal Cream), insert one applicatorful high into your vagina at bedtime. A single dose is usually sufficient to treat the infection. If you are having your period, ask your doctor when you should use the cream.
- If you are using a **clotrimazole pessary**, use the applicator to insert the pessary high up into your vagina at bedtime. Depending upon the strength of the pessary, a single dose is usually sufficient to treat the infection. If you are having your period, ask your doctor when you should use the pessary. If you are pregnant, do not use the applicator which is provided to insert the pessary, unless your doctor has recommended you to do so. Instead, use a finger to insert the pessary as high as possible.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Use clotrimazole exactly as your doctor tells you to, or as directed on the pack. Remember to complete the course of treatment as this will help to prevent the infection from coming back. If your symptoms do not improve within seven days, see your doctor for further advice.
- A pessary will dissolve overnight in the moisture in the vagina. If you have problems with vaginal dryness you may notice some undissolved pieces of pessary the following morning.
- Clotrimazole can damage the latex in condoms and diaphragms so do not rely on these forms of contraception. Use an alternative method of contraception (or do not have sex) for at least five days after using clotrimazole. Please also keep in mind that having vaginal sex while you have thrush could infect your partner.

- If after seven days your symptoms recur, you can buy a repeat course of clotrimazole from a pharmacy. If you have more than two occurrences of thrush during six months, you should speak with a doctor for further advice. An alternative treatment could be more suitable for you.

Can clotrimazole for thrush cause problems?

Clotrimazole is unlikely to cause any serious side-effects. It can occasionally cause some skin irritation, itching or stinging when it is first used. Stop using the product if you think this is causing problems. If you experience any other side-effects, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store clotrimazole for thrush

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

If you suspect that someone has swallowed some of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Canesten® Thrush Internal Cream 10% w/w vaginal cream](#); Bayer plc, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated March 2021.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Canesten® 500 mg Vaginal Pessary](#); Bayer plc, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2023.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Canesten® Thrush External Cream 2% w/w](#); Bayer Plc, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2021.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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