



Candidiasis in the Mouth: Understanding, Treating, and Preventing Oral Yeast Infections

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INTRODUCTION

Oral candidiasis, commonly known as oral thrush, is a fungal infection caused predominantly by *Candida albicans*. This opportunistic pathogen typically resides harmlessly in the mouth but can proliferate and cause infection when the delicate balance of the oral microbiome is disrupted. Factors contributing to the onset of oral candidiasis include weakened immune systems, use of antibiotics or corticosteroids, diabetes, hormonal changes, smoking, and wearing dentures. The condition manifests as creamy white lesions on the tongue, inner cheeks, gums, tonsils, or the roof of the mouth, often accompanied by redness, soreness, and difficulty swallowing. Oral candidiasis can affect individuals of all ages, but it is particularly common in infants, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems, such as individuals undergoing chemotherapy or living with HIV/AIDS. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are essential to alleviate symptoms and prevent the spread of infection. Treatment typically involves antifungal medications and addressing underlying predisposing factors [1,2]. Understanding the causes, symptoms, and management of oral candidiasis is crucial for healthcare providers in preventing and treating this common yet potentially uncomfortable and recurrent oral condition. This introduction delves into the etiology, risk factors, and clinical significance of oral candidiasis, emphasizing the importance of awareness and early intervention.

DESCRIPTION

Oral candidiasis, also known as oral thrush, is an infection of the oral mucosa caused by the overgrowth of *Candida* species, primarily *Candida albicans*. This condition arises when the balance of microorganisms in the mouth is disrupted, allowing *Candida* to proliferate. Common predisposing factors include immunosuppression (due to conditions such as HIV/AIDS or

chemotherapy), diabetes, prolonged use of antibiotics or corticosteroids, hormonal changes, smoking, and wearing dentures. Clinically, oral candidiasis presents as creamy white or yellowish plaques on the tongue, inner cheeks, gums, tonsils, or palate. These lesions can be easily scraped off, often revealing erythematous and sometimes bleeding mucosa underneath. Symptoms may include a cotton-like feeling in the mouth, loss of taste, pain, and difficulty swallowing. In severe cases, the infection can spread to the esophagus, leading to more significant health complications. Diagnosis is typically clinical, supported by microscopic examination or culture of scrapings [3,4]. Treatment involves antifungal medications, such as nystatin, clotrimazole, or fluconazole, along with addressing underlying predisposing factors to prevent recurrence. Maintaining good oral hygiene and regular dental check-ups are crucial in managing and preventing oral candidiasis, ensuring prompt treatment and reducing the risk of complications.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, oral candidiasis is a common fungal infection that requires prompt and effective treatment to alleviate symptoms and prevent complications. Understanding its risk factors and clinical manifestations is crucial for early diagnosis and management. Antifungal medications, along with addressing underlying conditions such as immunosuppression or poor oral hygiene, play a key role in treating and preventing recurrences of this infection. Clinically, oral candidiasis presents as creamy white or yellowish plaques on the tongue, inner cheeks, gums, tonsils, or palate. These lesions can be easily scraped off, often revealing erythematous and sometimes bleeding mucosa underneath. Regular dental check-ups and good oral hygiene practices are essential in maintaining a healthy oral environment and reducing the risk of oral candidiasis.

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Continued awareness and education about this condition can lead to better prevention and management strategies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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