CANDIDIASIS, ORAL (THRUSH)

I. DEFINITION:

Yeast infection of the mouth and throat caused by the fungus *Candida albicans*. Superficial fungal infection of the oral cavity occurs primarily in infants.

II. ETIOLOGY:

Small amounts of *Candida* is normally found on the skin and in the body. Unless the fungus becomes overgrown, it usually does produce any symptoms or infection. It is often seen as a secondary infection in persistent diaper rash or with antibiotic, oral steroid, oral contraceptive use, or in the chronically ill or immune-compromised children. Person to person transmission may occur from a woman to her infant when mother has a vaginal yeast infection and from breast feeding babies to their mothers when babies with thrush infect mothers’ nipples.

III. CLINICAL FEATURES:

A. Often asymptomatic but may have trouble feeding and swallowing with extensive involvement.

B. Mouth – friable, adherent white plaques on an erythematous base on the mucous membranes (thrush); cracked lips (cheilitis); and inflamed corners of the mouth (angular cheilitis).

C. Lesions are removable leaving a mildly inflamed base.

D. Client may have candidal diaper dermatitis (reddening and sensitivity of the affected area and a raised red border in some areas).

IV. MANAGEMENT PLAN:

A. General

1. Use good hand-hygiene at all times before nursing, feeding or handling the infant.

2. Infants should not be allowed to share pacifiers, nipples, or toys that will be put in the mouth.

3. Pacifiers, bottles/nipples, and toys should be washed thoroughly and sanitized after they have been in the mouth.

4. Refer to PHYSICIAN APPROVED PROTOCOL: DERMATITIS/DIAPER

5. General oral care, tooth and gum cleaning or brushing, should be encouraged.

6. Offer water after feeding.

B. Consultation/Referral:

1. Observe for sign of failure-to-thrive or poor hydration and refer appropriately.

2. Refer to physician or APRN.
3. Refer contact with vaginitis for treatment (if applicable).

C. Follow-up:

Determine tracking priority utilizing professional judgment.

REFERENCES:

AAP – HealthyChildren.org – Thrush and other Candida Infections  
