Canesten®

RECOMMENDING CANESTEN®

SUPPORT CUSTOMERS WITH THRUSH BY HELPING THEM CHOOSE THE TREATMENT FORMAT THAT SUITS THEM BEST

CANESTEN® BRAND OFFERS THE UK'S WIDEST RANGE OF THRUSH TREATMENT FORMATS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: After reading this guide, you will be able to:

- RECOGNISE **THRUSH SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES**
- OFFER A CHOICE OF **THRUSH TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**
- PROVIDE CUSTOMERS WITH **SELF-CARE ADVICE**

WHY CHOOSE CANESTEN®?

Canesten® is the UK's no.1 women's intimate health brand,* and has been offering effective products to help women take control of their intimate health for over 40 years.

Canesten® offers a complete solution that combines choice and effectiveness, treating both the cause and symptoms of vaginal yeast infections (thrush).

UNDERSTANDING THRUSH

Thrush is a fungal infection caused by the overgrowth of a fungus called *Candida albicans*.[2] Fungi like Candida thrive in warm, moist and airless places. Small numbers of Candida do live on the skin in and around the vagina; however, sometimes the balance of friendly bacteria like lactobacilli in the vagina changes due to various factors and causes Candida to multiply,[2,3] leading to thrush symptoms.

Sometimes thrush symptoms are minor and self-limiting. However, often the symptoms can cause significant discomfort.

9/10

women would recommend Canesten® products for relief of thrush[1]

EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH TREATMENT CHOICE

In the UK, many women (29%) feel uncomfortable talking to healthcare professionals about their gynaecological issues, and 84% of women feel that there have been instances where healthcare professionals have not listened to their concerns.[4] You should encourage open, non-judgemental conversations, to support women to confidently discuss their intimate health.

Canesten® can support the pharmacy team in guiding women towards the most suitable treatments for them, empowering customers with the knowledge to make the right choices for their situation and offering the **flexibility to choose the most appropriate format** for their specific needs.

Product information can be accessed on the last page.

*IRI unit sales data 52 w/e 03 January 2026

THERE ARE **6 MAIN SYMPTOMS** OF THRUSH:[5]

REDNESS · BURNING · ITCHING · UNUSUAL DISCHARGE · SORENESS · SWELLING

TREATMENT WITH CANESTEN®

Customers are likely to seek treatment choices based on suitability, previous experience, convenience and ease of application. It's important that you understand the differences between products available in the Canesten® range so your customer's individual needs can be met.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR THRUSH OTC?

Azoles are a class of antifungal medicines that inhibit fungal growth. They are particularly good at managing fungal infections due to their broad-spectrum activity and relatively favourable safety profile.[6]

Typically, short-course treatments with azoles effectively treat uncomplicated thrush. Treatment with azoles results in relief of symptoms and negative cultures in 80%–90% of patients who complete therapy.[7]

The two types of azoles available OTC to treat vaginal thrush are fluconazole and clotrimazole. They work by increasing permeability of the fungus cell membrane, causing the contents to leak out. This kills the fungus and treats the infection.[8,9]

Clotrimazole is available in various topical formulations in the Canesten® range. Helping your customer choose the best formulation for them is largely based on their personal preference. However, you should understand the differences between these various formulations in order to aid your recommendations.

Fluconazole is available OTC as Canesten® Thrush Oral Capsule and is indicated for the treatment of candidal vaginitis, acute or recurrent.

It can also be used for the treatment of partners with associated candidal balanitis (thrush of the penis head). Products containing fluconazole are not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women.†

- It is conveniently taken as a single dose and should be swallowed whole with a glass of water
- Common side affects include headache, stomach discomfort, diarrhoea, feeling sick, vomiting and rash.[10,11]

THE CANESTEN® RANGE

THIS TABLE HIGHLIGHTS THE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN THE CANESTEN® RANGE

PESSARY	SOFT GEL PESSARY	INTERNAL CREAM	ORAL CAPSULE	*The ONLY combination treatments for Thrush***
Clotrimazole (GSL)	Clotrimazole (GSL)	Clotrimazole (GSL)	Fluconazole, Clotrimazole (P)	
Clotrimazole (P)	Clotrimazole (P)	Clotrimazole (P)	Fluconazole (P)	Clotrimazole (P)
• Traditional internal vaginal pessary format • Suitable for women who are familiar with pessary format • Single dose 500mg pessary to be inserted at night	• Tear-shaped soft gel pessary format • Designed to be more comfortable to insert • Single dose 500mg pessary to be inserted at night	• Internal cream in a pre-filled applicator • May be more suited for women experiencing vaginal dryness • Single dose to be inserted as deeply as possible into the vagina at night	• Convenient oral capsule • Not suitable for use in pregnancy† • Capsule should be taken as a single dose, swallowed whole with a glass of water	• Treats candidal vulvitis • Add the 2% w/w Thrush External Cream to any internal treatment to create the combination • The 2% cream should be thinly applied two or three times daily to the vulva and surrounding area and rubbed in gently

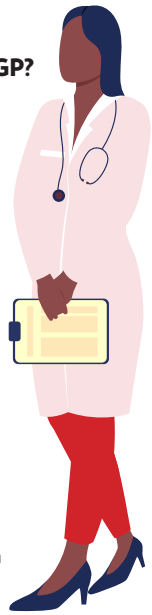
**Canesten® brand offers combined treatment in Canesten® Thrush Combi products and Canesten® Thrush Duo

† Care should be taken when recommending medicines for use in pregnancy as medicines can cross the placenta and may affect the fetus

REFERRAL AND DIFFERENTIAL **DIAGNOSES**

When should your customer see their GP?
The following customers should be referred:

- If they have not previously had thrush diagnosed by a doctor
- If they are pregnant or breastfeeding
- If they are under 16 or over 60
- If they have had recurrent episodes of thrush (more than twice in six months)
- If they have a weakened immune system
- If they are unsure whether they have thrush or this is the first time they have had these symptoms
- They or their partner have ever had a sexually transmitted disease
- They have ever had an allergic reaction to any antifungal products



- They have any of the following symptoms: irregular or abnormal vaginal bleeding; ulcers, blisters or sores of the vagina or vulva; lower abdominal pain; pain or difficulty in passing urine; fever or chills; feeling sick or vomiting; diarrhoea; or foul smelling vaginal discharge.

WHEN SHOULD A DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS BE CONSIDERED?[2]

Symptoms that might suggest a differential diagnosis include:

- A fishy odour
- Bleeding between periods or after sex
- Frequent urination
- A rash or blister on the skin of the vulva
- Symptoms that indicate a urinary tract infection, e.g. fever

EASING DISCOMFORT AND PREVENTION

Disruption of the vaginal microbiome can cause overgrowth of *Candida albicans*, leading to thrush.[2] There are some things you could advise your customer to do or avoid to ease thrush and help prevent it from coming back.[2,3] You can advise your customer to:[2,3]

DO:

- Wear cotton underwear
- Wash the vagina with water and an emollient
- Avoid vaginal sex until while having thrush or using using Canesten®
- Dry the vagina properly after washing

DON'T:

- Wear nylon underwear or tight-fitting jeans
- Wash the vagina with strong soaps and fragranced shower gels
- Use vaginal deodorants and douches
- Wash underwear with biological washing powders or liquids or using fabric conditioners.

CLICK HERE to access further training resources on Canesten® thrush treatments

CLICK HERE for product information

References: 1. Zhang L, et al. Vulvovaginal candidiasis: A real-world evidence study of the perceived benefits of Canesten®. SAGE Open Med. 2022 Mar 28;10:20503121221085437 (n=441) **2.** Tidy C. Vaginal Thrush. Patient 2024. Available at: https://patient.info/sexual-health/vaginal-discharge-female-discharge/vaginal-thrush-yeast-infection#how-common-is-thrush **3.** NHS. Thrush in men and women. 2023. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/thrush-in-men-and-women/ **4.** Gov.uk. April 2022. Results of the 'Women's Health – Let's talk about it' survey. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/womens-health-strategy-call-for-evidence/outcome/results-of-the-womens-health-lets-talk-about-it-survey. **5.** Sobel, J. Genital Candidiasis. Medicine. Vol 42, Issue 7, June 2014, p364-368. **6.** Gaber S. Azoles: A Complete Guide to Antifungal Agents, Their Mechanism, Clinical Applications, and Safety. 2024. Available at: https://forum.facmedicine.com/threads/azoles-a-complete-guide-to-antifungal-agents-their-mechanism-clinical-applications-and-safety.88659/ **7.** Workowski KA, et al. Sexually Transmitted Infections Treatment Guidelines, 2021. MMWR Recomm Rep. 2021 Jul 23;70(4):1-187. Available at: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8344968/ **8.** NHS. Common questions about fluconazole. 2023. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/fluconazole/common-questions-about-fluconazole **9.** NHS. Common questions about clotrimazole. 2022. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/clotrimazole-for-thrush/common-questions-about-clotrimazole-for-thrush/ **10.** NHS. About fluconazole. 2023. Available at: https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/fluconazole/about-fluconazole/

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