Vaginal thrush, sometimes called “monilia” or candidiasis infection, is a common condition caused by an overgrowth of the micro-organism Candida albicans.

What are the symptoms?
Symptoms around the genital area include:
- Itching.
- Irritation.
- Burning.
- Soreness.
- Swelling of the vaginal opening.
Other symptoms are:
- Cheesy-white discharge (may be absent).
- Unpleasant odour.
- Discomfort during intercourse.
- Discomfort when urinating.

What is the cause?
Candida is one of a large number of organisms present in the bowel and vagina. These organisms do no harm until something upsets their normal balance (and sometimes that trigger factor is not obvious). They then multiply and cause the infection.

Factors likely to cause the infection are:
- Diabetes.
- Treatment with antibiotics or cortisone.
- Pregnancy.
Factors that might cause or aggravate vaginal thrush are:
- Intercourse.
- Oral contraceptives.
- Tight-fitting jeans.
- Nylon underwear.
- Leaving on a wet bathing suit after swimming.
- Humid weather.
- Travel (due to prolonged sitting).
- Obesity.

What is the treatment?
- See your doctor about a vaginal cream or pessary to insert high into the vagina.
- Dry the genital area thoroughly after showering or bathing.
- Wear loose-fitting cotton underwear.
- Avoid having intercourse while you have thrush.
- Sometimes tablets to take by mouth are prescribed.
- Bathing the genital area gently can help relieve the discomfort and itching. Use one tablespoon of bicarbonate of soda in one litre of warm water.

Should my partner be treated?
This is a controversial issue but is not recommended because there is no proven benefit from treating your partner.

How is it prevented?
- Wash and thoroughly dry the genital area once a day.
- When possible, avoid pantyhose, tight jeans and tight underwear. (Candida thrives in warm, moist, dark areas.)
- Do not use vaginal douches, powders or deodorants.
- Follow a healthy diet.

What should you do if the infection keeps returning?
- Are you taking antibiotics? Ask your doctor’s advice about the thrush.
- If you are using oral contraceptives, you might have to change to another form of contraception.
- See your doctor about checking your urine for sugar (diabetes) or another infection.