

Supplying over the counter treatments in pregnancy and breastfeeding - thrush

If a pregnant or breastfeeding patient presents in your pharmacy, seeking treatment for thrush or iron deficiency anaemia, there are products that you can sell/supply within their marketing authorisations (product licences).

Vulvovaginal candidiasis

For treatment of vulvovaginal candidiasis (also known as vaginal thrush or yeast infection), the following products would be potentially suitable for a pregnant person (includes people who do not identify as a woman but who can fall pregnant):

Name of product (& link to summary of product characteristics)	Legal category	Name of product (& link to summary of product characteristics)	Legal category
Canesten Thrush Combi Soft Gel Pessary & External Cream 500mg / 2% w/w vaginal capsule & cream	GSL	Clotrimazole 500mg Vaginal Tablet (Tillomed Laboratories Ltd)	P
Canesten Thrush Combi Pessary & External Cream 500mg / 2% w/w pessary & cream	GSL	Canesten Thrush External Cream 2% w/w cream	P
Canesten 100mg Pessary	P	Canesten Thrush Pessary 500mg pessary	P
Canesten 200mg Pessary	P	Canesten Thrush Soft Gel Pessary 500mg vaginal capsule	P
Clotrimazole Cream 1% (Mylan)	P	Canesten Cream	P

The summaries of product characteristics (SPCs) for the above products state:

‘Clotrimazole can be used during pregnancy, but only under the supervision of a physician or midwife.’

Therefore, if patient presenting in the pharmacy seeking treatment has received advice from a healthcare professional, it would be acceptable to supply one of the above products above and counsel the patient appropriately.

Additionally, the SPCs state that **‘clotrimazole may be used during lactation’**. Therefore, it would be appropriate to supply one of the above products to a lactating person for the treatment of vaginal thrush, if they have been advised by a healthcare professional that it would be a suitable treatment.

Thrush in the nipple area

If advised by a healthcare professional, topical clotrimazole can be applied to the nipple area for treatment of thrush. As clotrimazole cream can safely be used in breastfeeding, then a suitable clotrimazole 1% cream could be supplied to a patient in this circumstance. Examples of suitable products are shown below, but there will be other suitable products (refer to the summary of product characteristics and/or patient information leaflet of specific products for more information):

Name of product (& link to summary of product characteristics)	Legal category
Clotrimazole Cream 1% (Mylan)	P
Canesten Cream	P

Counselling points:

- Where the patient is being supplied a product containing a pessary or vaginal tablet, it is most important to advise the patient **not to use the applicator** supplied in the package – the vaginal pessary/tablet should be inserted using a clean finger instead.
- Where a cream is to be applied to the nipple area, it should be washed off prior to breastfeeding baby
- Ensure appropriate safety netting advice has been provided to all patients to ensure that they seek further help from a healthcare professional if symptoms worsen or don't resolve.
- If the patient has thrush, advise on self-management measures to provide symptom relief – refer to [NICE CKS](#) for details.

Additional information about choice of product

- Products containing clotrimazole creams intended to be used internally for thrush are not recommended for pregnant patients, as the cream must be applied using an applicator, which is not suitable for use in pregnancy.
- There may be other suitable clotrimazole products. If you are unsure if a product is suitable for supply to a pregnant patient, refer to the summary of product characteristics via the electronic medicines compendium: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc> and/or the patient information leaflet (PIL).

References

Individual product summaries of product characteristics on the electronic medicines compendium: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc>

NHS Dictionary of medicines and Devices (DM&D): <https://dmd-browser.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/>

NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries – [Scenario: candida female genital during pregnancy](#)