

Skin Conditions in Pregnancy (Rash and Itch)

What is it?

During pregnancy, you may experience some changes to your skin. Sometimes, you can experience a rash or itchy skin. The types of rash and itch that occur in pregnancy include:

- **Polymorphic eruption of pregnancy** – a fairly common itchy rash that usually develops in late pregnancy (third trimester), within stretch marks on the abdomen; it often happens in a first pregnancy
- **Prurigo of pregnancy** – an intensely itchy rash that generally develops in the second or third trimester; an uncommon condition that mainly affects the abdomen and the limbs
- **Pemphigoid gestationis** – a rare condition that begins with itching, followed by a hive-like rash; it is an autoimmune condition, meaning that your immune system reacts against your own skin

Usually, the rash or itch are not serious and can be managed with simple measures such as creams or lotions, or mild topical steroids.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will diagnose the type of rash or itch you have. To do this, they may:

- Do a physical examination of your skin
- Do a blood test to check things such as your liver for a condition called cholestasis of pregnancy
- Refer you to a dermatologist

Your treatment will depend on the type of rash that you have, and may include using:

- A cream or ointment (emollients) to help with dry skin
- Short term topical steroids
- Antihistamines
- Oral steroids

Your GP may also give you general advice about how to take care of your skin (see 'What can I do?').

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may want to see you again to check how your itch and rash are going. Some types of rash go away after delivery. However, some rashes come back again or could cause other health problems. Monitor your symptoms, and always see your GP if you are worried about your skin.

What can I do?

- Avoid scratching the itchy area
- Keep your nails short to prevent breaking the skin if you do scratch
- Have a cool bath or shower
- Be careful, however, as excessive showering or bathing may make it worse
- Gently pat yourself dry with a clean towel after bathing
- Do not rub or use the towel to scratch yourself
- Avoid using any soaps, shower gels or foam bath products, as they can dry the skin and make itching worse
- Wear loose cotton clothing, as this can help prevent you overheating which makes the itch worse

What supports are available?

Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department

The Liverpool Hospital Dermatology Department provides a broad range of skin services with specialist dermatologists. With staff specialising in common and rare skin diseases, the team offer treatment for all ages, from newborns to the elderly and pregnant women. As your GP for a referral.

Private clinics

Private specialist clinics are available in the South Western Sydney Health District. Ask your GP for a referral.

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What questions could I ask my doctor?



- Will the baby be affected?
- Can I have a normal delivery?
- Will the baby be able to breastfeed?
- What caused my rash?
- Is my condition infectious?
- Will my rash come back?
- Do I need to take any medications?
- What activities should I avoid?



Where can I learn more?

- **British Association of Dermatologists** – pemphigoid gestationis: bad.org.au
- **British Association of Dermatologists** – polymorphic eruption of pregnancy (PEP): bad.org.au
- **British Association of Dermatologists** – melasma: bad.org.au
- **European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology** – common skin changes during pregnancy: eadv.org

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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