

Pregnancy Rash

Pruritic Urticarial Papules and Plaques of Pregnancy (PUPPP)

Pregnancy Rash

As your baby grows and your body changes (and your skin stretches), you may feel itchy. Pregnancy itches and rashes are usually harmless, although they are bothersome.

One rash unique to pregnant women is pruritic urticarial papules and plaques of pregnancy (PUPPP), or polymorphic eruption of pregnancy (PEP).

PUPPP is the most common rash of pregnancy. It usually occurs during a woman's first pregnancy, during the third trimester or shortly after delivery. The cause is not known.

It usually starts as a red rash on the abdomen and can spread to other parts of the body. The rash is very itchy.

PUPPP does not affect the baby and it cannot be spread to others. PUPPP rarely occurs in future pregnancies.

How the Rash Develops

- The rash usually starts on the stretch marks (striae) of the abdomen. It appears as hives or red patches.
- The red patches can spread to the arms, hands, legs, feet and the buttocks, back, chest and neck. Usually, the rash does not affect the face, bottoms of the feet and palms of the hands.

How Your Health Care Provider Will Confirm PUPPP

- There are no tests that can confirm PUPPP. Your health care provider can tell if you have PUPPP by looking at the rash.

Treatment

- Take an over-the-counter oral antihistamine such as Claritin® (loratadine), Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) or Zyrtec® (cetirizine).
- Use over-the-counter anti-itch medicines to spread on the rash (such as Benadryl®, Aveeno®, Caladryl® or similar products). Be careful that your skin does not get too dry. This can make the itching worse.
- Take oatmeal baths.
- Use pine tar soap or Sarna® lotion.
- Put cool towels on the rash.
- Wear cool, lightweight clothing.
- Wear loose-fitting shoes and socks if the tops of your feet are affected.

Your health care provider may prescribe a steroid cream or an allergy medicine (taken by mouth) to relieve the itching.

When the Rash Will Go Away

- The rash will usually go away shortly after birth. It may disappear within a few hours or up to 1 to 2 weeks.

(over)

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you:

- need a stronger medicine or if you are having trouble sleeping (He or she may give you a prescription medicine.)
- think your rash has become infected
- have severe itching without a rash that starts on the palms of your hands or the bottoms of your feet (This type of itching is usually worse at night.)
- have any other or unusual symptoms.