Pruritic Urticarial Papules and Plaques of Pregnancy (PUPPP)

When you are pregnant, your body changes in many ways. That includes the skin. Rashes sometimes develop. The most common skin rash during pregnancy is called pruritic urticarial papules and plaques of pregnancy (PUPPP). The small red bumps sometimes form large plaques. These are very itchy. The rash usually appears in the last few weeks of pregnancy during the third trimester. Sometimes, it can occur shortly after birth. It goes away within 1 to 2 months after delivery. It is not harmful. You may not like the way it looks or feels. However, there is no reason to believe that it does any harm to your baby. It will not leave scars on your skin.

CAUSES

Exactly why this skin rash develops is not known.

- Your skin stretches rapidly when you are pregnant. This may cause PUPPP. Stretching happens most over the belly. Skin also stretches in other areas, including the legs, hips, and breasts.
- Some women are more likely than others to develop PUPPP. They include:
  - Those who are having a baby for the first time.
  - Women who gain too much weight.
  - Those who are carrying more than 1 baby.

SYMPTOMS

- Appearance of a red, raised rash.
  - It might look like hives or an allergic reaction.
  - Sometimes, there are tiny blisters in the center of the patches.
  - The skin around the rash is often pale.
  - The rash is usually on the belly. It can spread to other parts of the body, such as the thighs or arms.
- Severe itching.

DIAGNOSIS

To decide if you have PUPPP, your caregiver may:

- Ask about symptoms you have noticed.
- Ask about your overall health, today and in the past.
- Ask about your pregnancy.
- Ask whether you have been near anything that could cause an allergic reaction.
- Examine the skin on parts of the body that concern you.
- Order a biopsy. A small sample of skin tissue is removed and looked at under a microscope.
- Order blood tests. These may rule out other reasons for a rash.

TREATMENT

The goal is to stop the itching and keep the rash from spreading. Usually, a cream is used to do this. However, treatment varies. Common options include:

- **Topical corticosteroids.** These are powerful drugs that can help stop itching.
  - Usually, the drug is used as a cream or ointment. It is put directly on the rash.
  - Sometimes, a stronger oral corticosteroid is needed. This is taken as a pill.
- **Antihistamines.** These drugs are sometimes given for PUPPP. They are oral medicines. They are normally used for allergies, but they may help with the intense itching that can be seen in PUPPP.

Treatment helps nearly all women with PUPPP. The creams or pills should make your skin feel better fairly quickly. The rash and itching should be gone a few months after your baby is born.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- **Do not** scratch the rash.
- Wear loose clothing.
- Apply any creams that your caregiver prescribed. Follow the directions carefully.
- Keep all follow-up appointments with your caregiver. This will allow your caregiver to make sure your treatment is working.
- Learn more about skin care. You might want to meet with a skin doctor (*dermatologist*). Ask about a moisturizer that would help your skin while it stretches during pregnancy. Also, ask about choosing skin products that are right for you.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have any questions about your medicines.
- The itching continues or the rash continues to spread.
- You continue to be uncomfortable or unable to sleep. Your caregiver may want to change your medicine.

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