

Irritating itches

It's quite normal to experience some itching during pregnancy as hormones dry out your skin, your blood volume increases and your skin stretches. "Try to resist the urge to scratch," Dr Murad says. "But treat any red and itchy areas with a cold compress or have a soothing bath and then apply a hypoallergenic moisturiser to help relieve symptoms."

DID YOU KNOW?

Stretchmarks affect up to 80% of pregnant women

If you suddenly find yourself suffering with eczema, use very gentle soap products and ask your GP to prescribe special emollients to stop your skin from drying out. It is relatively rare, but you may also suffer from PUPPPS (pruritic urticarial papules and plaques of pregnancy), which are raised hives and bumps that appear during the third trimester. These are harmless, but again incredibly itchy.

However, sometimes intense itching can be a sign of a potentially dangerous liver condition in pregnancy called intrahepatic cholestasis of pregnancy (ICP), also known as obstetric cholestasis (OC).

If you suspect this might be the case, contact your GP or midwife, who can run tests to confirm it and decide how best to manage your remaining pregnancy. Sufferers are usually induced early due to a link with premature labour and stillbirth. Find out more at icpsupport.org