

## Itching in Pregnancy

Adapted from Pomegranate Midwives

### What causes itching?

- Increase in blood circulating to the skin
- Rapid growth and stretching of the skin, especially of the belly
- Dehydration
- Deficiency of essential oils in diet
- Allergies, which can be worsened by pregnancy
- Skin sensitivity to new creams (e.g. those used to prevent stretch marks)
- In rare cases, liver problems resulting in a build-up of bile salts [Intrahepatic Cholestasis of Pregnancy]
- Infection (e.g. candida)
- Any kind of stress (physically, emotionally, mentally) can worsen existing symptoms

### When does it happen? How long does it last?

- Can occur anytime, but more likely in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> trimesters, especially if related to skin stretching and growth
- If it is pregnancy related, it will go away soon after birth (usually within 48 hours)

### What can I do?

*To eliminate the cause:*

- Sometimes symptoms can be minimized or eliminated with diet/lifestyle changes
- Minimize stress
- Hydration —2-3L per day

*To help cope with symptoms:*

- Olive/almond/apricot oil (2-3 tablespoons in bath)
- Flax seed oil (internally)
- Omega 3-6-9 oil (e.g. Udo's oil)
- Homeopathic Apis Mellifica
- Milk thistle tincture
- Dandelion root tincture
- Light therapy (time in the sun)
- Cold compresses, cool baths
- Baking soda – in bath or applied as paste
- Calamine lotion

- Aloe vera gel (externally)
- Oatmeal baths
- Antihistamine
- Cut nails really short to prevent damage from scratching
- Hydrocortisone cream (needs prescription)
- Oral steroid (needs prescription)

**When should I contact my care provider?**

- If you develop a rash
- If your itching is on the soles of your feet and palms of your hands
- If you have upper-right quadrant pain (i.e. pain in your liver area, under the right ribs)
- If the itching is interfering with your life. Even if the cause is benign, you may need prescription topical or oral steroids to help cope