

beauty and the bump

What Causes Red, Blotchy Skin in Pregnancy?

Expecting a little one? You may be expecting some skin changes too

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BY [KAREN LOBELLO](#)

You knew your body was going to go through significant changes during pregnancy, but you might not have thought too much about the inevitable skin alterations that would accompany the process.

“Remember, the skin is a window to what is going on inside the body,” says Julia Hunter, a dermatologist and founder of Wholistic Dermatology in Beverly Hills, California. You go through hormonal shifts and changes such as adjustments in blood flow, and this often results in outward signs on the skin. You can recognize

and manage these issues. Although variations in the skin are normal for pregnant women, it's good to consult your health care provider when in doubt.

Conditions

Every woman's experience is different, but common skin conditions often surface during pregnancy. If you develop a fungal, bacterial or viral skin rash, it could result in red, blotchy skin, Hunter says.

You might get the infamous “pregnancy glow” causing your cheeks to redden. This is due to a 50 percent increase in the volume of blood that is circulating, according to the American Pregnancy Association. Another skin oddity of pregnancy is palmar erythema. This is redness on the palms and sometimes on the soles of the feet. It's thought to be caused by an increase in estrogen levels, according to the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Since the body is already overheated, some women develop heat rash when skin rubs against clothing or other skin. And those pimples you thought you said goodbye to in junior high school? They just might pay you a visit during pregnancy as well.

About one in 50 women experience PUPP, notes the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. This shows as red, itchy patches on the abdomen, thighs, buttocks and extremities. It can be treated with oral medicines. It comes and goes and typically disappears after delivery.

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Causes

The vast majority of skin problems seen during pregnancy result from challenges to the immune system, Hunter observes, including the extra blood volume of pregnancy. If you had existing internal conditions before you got pregnant, such as fungal overgrowth, significant inflammation, low thyroid or adrenal function, gut inflammation or high blood sugar, your immune system has already been fighting these issues, adds Hunter. When fluids are further diluted, you exhibit symptoms of those internal conditions because the skin tells you what's going on inside your body.

Along with the extra blood volume, the large uterus compresses, restricts and impedes blood and lymphatic circulation and the flow to organs, tissues and limbs. The removal of toxins and infections is decreased. This is a major reason why you see red, blotchy, itchy skin and other skin disorders more during pregnancy, Hunter says.

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