

## Review: Intrahepatic cholestasis. A puzzling disorder of pregnancy

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Intrahepatic cholestasis of pregnancy is characterized by skin pruritus and a biochemical cholestasis of mild to moderate severity appearing during pregnancy (mainly in the third trimester) and disappearing after delivery. It recurs in 40-60% of future pregnancies. The intensity of pruritus and the laboratory alterations (increased serum bile salts and transaminases in almost all patients, hyperbilirubinaemia in 20% of patients) fluctuate during one pregnancy and also vary in subsequent affected pregnancies. This disease has no meaningful consequences for the mother; in contrast, it is associated with an increased risk of foetal distress, causing premature deliveries and stillbirths. Cholestasis of pregnancy has been recognized in most countries and ethnic groups but its prevalence is higher in Chile (14% of deliveries in 1975 and approximately 4% in 1995) and in Sweden than in other countries. The cause is unknown. Sex hormones, mainly oestrogens and progesterone, appear to be involve