

Pregnancy and Ichthyosis

Overview

Many individuals with ichthyosis have healthy pregnancies and babies. However, pregnancy can bring unique challenges depending on your specific type of ichthyosis, the medications you use, and how your skin responds to hormonal and physical changes.

This guide provides general information and helpful questions to discuss with your healthcare team before, during, and after pregnancy.

Before Pregnancy

Planning and Preconception Care

- **Meet with your dermatologist and obstetrician (OB-GYN)** before becoming pregnant. They can help you review medications and develop a care plan.
 - **Genetic counseling** is recommended if you or your partner have ichthyosis or a family history of the condition. A genetic counselor can explain inheritance patterns, carrier testing, and prenatal testing options.
 - **Medication review:** Some common treatments for ichthyosis—especially oral retinoids like **acitretin** or **isotretinoin**—can cause birth defects and **must be stopped well before conception**. Discuss safe alternatives with your dermatologist.
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During Pregnancy

Skin and Symptom Changes

- Hormonal changes may make your skin **drier or oilier**, and scaling may increase or decrease.
- Some people experience **itching, cracking, or increased irritation** as their abdomen stretches.
- Use **gentle, fragrance-free moisturizers** multiple times per day. Ointments or creams with petrolatum, ceramides, or urea can help maintain skin hydration.
- **Avoid overheating**, which can worsen itching or irritation.

Monitoring and Care

- Tell your OB team about your skin condition early. They can help coordinate care with a dermatologist familiar with ichthyosis.
- **Hydration and nutrition** are especially important—drink water regularly and follow a balanced diet.
- **Infection prevention:** If skin cracks or fissures appear, monitor for redness, swelling, or pain, and contact your provider if infection is suspected.

Labor and Delivery

- Let your birth team know about ichthyosis before delivery.
- Some individuals with thicker scaling or limited flexibility may prefer certain positions for comfort.
- If you have **collodion membrane** at birth or a severe type of ichthyosis, inform your newborn care team so they can monitor your baby's skin closely.
- A **neonatologist** or **pediatric dermatologist** may be consulted for your newborn if ichthyosis is suspected.

After Pregnancy Postpartum Skin Care

- Hormonal changes can affect your skin in the months after delivery—keep your regular moisturizing routine and monitor for flares.
- **Sleep deprivation and stress** may worsen symptoms; ask for support from family, friends, or your healthcare team.

Breastfeeding

- Most moisturizers are safe to use while breastfeeding, but avoid applying products with **salicylic acid, urea (>10%), or retinoids** on areas where your baby's skin may come into contact.
- If you need medication, confirm safety with your OB or pediatrician.

Genetics and Inheritance

- Ichthyosis can be inherited in several different ways (autosomal dominant, autosomal recessive, or X-linked).
- A genetic counselor can help explain your family's specific pattern and what it means for future pregnancies.

Emotional Well-Being

- Pregnancy and parenting with ichthyosis can be rewarding and challenging.
- **Peer support** through FIRST's **Peer Navigator Program** and online communities can connect you with others who've had similar experiences.

When to Contact Your Doctor

- Sudden worsening of skin symptoms
- Signs of infection (pain, pus, fever, swelling)
- Concerns about medication safety or side effects
- Questions about genetic risks or testing options

Helpful Resources

- **FIRST – Foundation for Ichthyosis & Related Skin Types**
www.firstskinfoundation.org
Email: info@firstskinfoundation.org
- **Genetic Counseling Resources**
www.nsgc.org – National Society of Genetic Counselors

Pregnancy Exposure Information

www.mothertobaby.org – Medication safety during pregnancy & breastfeeding

This Adult Toolkit Resource brought to you by:



This information is provided as a service to patients and parents of patients who have ichthyosis. It is not intended to supplement appropriate medical care, but instead to complement that care with guidance in practical issues facing patients and parents. Neither FIRST, its Board of Directors, Medical & Scientific Advisory Board, Board of Medical Editors, nor Foundation staff and officials endorse any treatments or products reported here. All issues pertaining to the care of patients with ichthyosis should be discussed with a dermatologist experienced in the treatment of their skin disorder.



Foundation for
Ichthyosis & Related
Skin Types

PO Box 1067, Lansdale, PA 19446-0687
Phone: 800-545-3286
Website: www.firstskinfoundation.org
Email: info@firstskinfoundation.org

Improve lives and seek cures for those affected by ichthyosis and related skin types.

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