

## “I felt like insects were crawling under my skin”

**Yvonne Corbishley, 31, lives in Eastbourne, East Sussex, with husband Graeme, 32, and children Jonah, 3, and Megan, 12 months**

**Length of labour** 4hrs, 50 minutes  
**Pain relief** Gas and air, diamorphine

**N**o matter how hard I scratched, the familiar maddening itch on the soles of my feet just wouldn't ease. I was 27 weeks pregnant and knew straight away what the cause would be. I'd had the same symptom while expecting my first child, Jonah.

That time around, I'd been diagnosed with intrahepatic cholestasis of pregnancy (ICP), also known as obstetric cholestasis (OC). It's a liver disorder that occurs in pregnancy when the flow of bile from the liver slows down, causing bile acids to build up in the blood. Then after an initial clear blood test, I got a frantic call at 29 weeks to say that I had it again. My bile acids had jumped from six to 47 in a week.

I started on drug treatment, but the itching was awful – it felt as though I had insects crawling under my skin. My hands and feet were the worst, and felt like they were burning. It made it difficult to sleep at night.

With ICP there's an increased risk of stillbirth in the last few weeks, so I was given a date to be induced at 37 weeks. Two days before I was due at the hospital, I went for my routine checks and my bile acids had leapt again, to 125. “It's best if we get the baby out now rather than wait,” said the midwife.

Returning that evening, I had a pessary, then Graeme headed home to look after Jonah while I grabbed as

much sleep as I could. In the morning, I had another pessary and walked around, trying to keep active.

By lunchtime, I was getting regular contractions and bounced on my birthing ball. After a sweep and having my waters broken, the contractions grew more intense. I managed with gas and air, then had some diamorphine.

Finally, I was ready to push and Megan arrived at 8.50pm, weighing 6lb 14oz. She had lots of hair and cute little chubby cheeks. As soon as she was born, the itching disappeared. What a relief! It was a couple of months before my liver function returned fully to normal, but I'm just so thankful that both my children arrived safe and well. **PPP**



### YVONNE'S BIRTH TIPS

- ★ If you're admitted to hospital with ICP, take a sweatband to wear on your wrist. Itchy wrists and plastic hospital tags are not a good combination!
- ★ Put some Isotonic sports drinks in your hospital bag. If labour goes on for a long time, you'll need the extra energy boost.
- ★ If you know you're going to be induced early, buy a few vests and sleepsuits in tiny baby size.

For more information on pre-eclampsia, ICP and gestational diabetes, visit

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