

# Skin care during pregnancy

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When a woman is pregnant she is usually aware of the fact that everything she does or does not ingest into her organism can influence the development of her fetus. The same consciousness should exist regarding everything that is applied on the skin during pregnancy. Most people believe that if a product says it's 100% natural it also means that it's safe. This is not always true, especially when pregnancy is concerned.

The skin is the largest human organ and it has a great power to resorb substances applied to it. High level of progesterone and estrogen hormones during pregnancy combined with baby's antigens can often cause various unpleasant changes on the skin of expectant mothers.

In order to stop the possible problems, it is necessary to use creams and lotions in everyday skin care which can help in solving and preventing the eventual problems, while at the same time they won't threaten the health of the baby.

## Spots on the face and pregnancy

Spots on the face are a common complication during pregnancy and are a huge esthetic problem for women. The most commonly used substance to remove the spots is called **hydrochinon**. Hydrochinon is one of the most dangerous substances found in cosmetics and is mostly absorbed through skin and it has a very harmful effect on the future health of the baby. It should be avoided during pregnancy.

Another commonly used substance for spot removal is **tretinoin** (synthetic vitamin A). There is a great controversy over whether the absorption of tretinoin through the skin changes it's molecule to the point where it can affect the baby, however considering the clear evidence that the tablets containing tretinoin have teratogenic effect (they damage the development of the baby), this substance is also highly forbidden, whether in pills or creams.

Tretinoin derivatives are very common in acne treating substances. During pregnancy, due to large hormonal changes, patients can experience complete acne withdrawal or a significant worsening of the condition. During that period it is necessary to use only the therapy prescribed by a dermatologist because most of the substances that solve the acne problematics are strictly forbidden during pregnancy. **Clindamycin lotion** or gel, and mixtures that contain **amracin** antibiotics and **corticosteroids** should be avoided. Also, **adapalene**, **tazarotene** and **isotretinoin** are strictly forbidden.

## Skin and body care and prevention of stretch marks during pregnancy

The appearance of stretch marks during pregnancy is considered a hormonally caused appearance conditioned mainly by a woman's genetic predisposition. Cracking of the skin is attributed, along with hormones, to rapid stretching of the skin due to enlargement of the stomach and the growth of the breasts. The only prevention is maintaining adequate moisture and oiliness of the skin as is a mild massage of the skin with substances designed to prevent stretch marks.

There is a wide range of products in the market that combat stretch marks and they all have

various ingredients. Considering they should be applied many times a day, this increases their absorption significantly, and we should carefully read the declarations to see if a certain product is intended for use during pregnancy.

### Retinoids during pregnancy

Retinoids are found in most of the anti aging products and they prevent the degradation of collagen. They are a group of substances which should be avoided in facial and body creams if you are pregnant. It can be found on the label as: **adapalene, retin a, retinoic acid, retinol, retinyl linoleate, retinyl palmitate**. They are especially highly concentrated in lotions made for treatment of already created stretch marks.

### Salicylic acid and pregnancy

Salicylic acid is a mild acid found in small quantities in most of the products used to treat problematic and oily skin. It is dissolved in oil which allows it to penetrate deep into skin and clean pores. Salicylic acid belongs to the group of aspirines which gives it antiinflammatory property.

The safety of Salicylic acid for pregnant women depends on the acidity of the product and on the amount which is used daily. High doses of salicylate, when taken in tablets, cause damage to the fetus. Small doses applied to the skin are considered safe, and it is safe to use products which contain less than 2% of salicylic acid.

If the skin is damaged, the absorption is larger and in these situations use is not advised. Chemical peels with salicylic acid are forbidden during pregnancy because high concentrations of salicylic acid are used in these procedures. If the peel is necessary then it should be performed by a professional.

### Fruit acids and pregnancy

Fruit acids **AHA, glycolic** and **milk acid** are allowed during pregnancy. They are a very common ingredient in face and body creams and in stretch mark prevention products.

Peels with aforementioned products are not advised during pregnancy unless they are necessary exclusively due to a possible occurrence of a reactive pigmentation.

### Phytoestrogens and pregnancy

Phytoestrogens are considered safe to use during pregnancy and are commonly found in products for stretch mark prevention, however, their longterm use is still not fully evaluated. What is known is that they can contribute to the creation of pigmentation on the face and appearance of pimples.

Phytoestrogens can be found under these names on the declarations: **lecithin, phosphatidylcholine, soy extract, vegetable protein**.

### Parabens during pregnancy

Parabens are preservatives found in almost all cosmetic products. They are very common allergens and their absorption is extremely high. They can behave like like estrogen molecules in the organism.

What is especially worrying is that parabens have been discovered in the tissue of breast cancers and in higher concentrations in the semen they make sperm less active. Detailed testing of these

substances is being conducted, but deodorants and creams without parabens can already be found in the market.

### Chemical depilatories - depilatory creams

Hair removal with chemical depilatories is considered safe during pregnancy. Complications can arise with oversensitivity which don't necessarily exist prior to pregnancy. Before covering the whole surface of the leg it is recommended to conduct a test on a small surface of the skin 24 to 48h before.

### Sunscreens and pregnancy

Sun protection is very important during pregnancy. Substances like **titanium dioxide** and **zinc oxide** are substances that give good protection without being absorbed into the bloodstream.

**Oxybenzone** content is linked to the decrease in the weight of babies and should be avoided.

### Makeup and pregnancy

Makeup is considered mostly safe during pregnancy. You should pay attention if the liquid powder says it contains something more than retinoids. Mineral powders are more desirable than liquid ones because they don't pass through facial pores and they don't leave room for resorption.

Nail polishing is not prohibited during pregnancy. According to some studies **acetones** can negatively influence pregnancy. Since there aren't enough studies regarding the harmfulness of nail polish it is advised to use these substances in well ventilated rooms and to apply one coating of nail polish.