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Baby-safe beauty

Follow these simple steps to pregnancy-proof your skin care routine. **BY TIFFANY R. JANSEN**

There's so much advice out there for expectant women that it's difficult to know what to adopt and what to ignore. Are you doomed to forgo your routine hair color touch-ups for the next nine months? Do you really need to put off visits to the nail salon until after you've stopped breastfeeding? Is your favorite moisturizer temporarily off-limits? And just how dangerous is your acne treatment to your baby?

"You can make yourself absolutely crazy," warns Karen Ashby, MD, OB/GYN at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center in Ohio. Or you could do like I did and pretty much dump your entire beauty regimen just to "play it safe." I can only imagine what went through the minds of family, friends and even complete strangers when they saw my graying roots and pimple-riddled visage!

While there are products and treatments you definitely want to avoid, the good news is that most of the things women use in their skin care routines are completely safe during pregnancy. Here's a breakdown of what to keep, what to ditch and what bump-friendly alternatives to add into the mix.

Cosmetics

There's no need to fret about your general cosmetics: makeup, moisturizers, scrubs and toners are all extremely safe.

According to Linda Loretz, chief toxicologist at the Personal Care Products Council, an industry trade group based in Washington, D.C., "Cosmetics and care products are one of the safest categories that the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) regulates" because products are required to be substantiated before they can go on the market. Toxicologists, chemists, cosmetic formulators and microbiologists weigh in on the development process, and then products are subject to numerous types of tests to ensure safety.

Oil cleansers and moisturizers tend to be popular among expectant women, according to Joshua Zeichner, MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at New York City's Mount Sinai Medical Center, because they contain natural ingredients.

"It really depends on the person," says Zeichner, noting that some moms-to-be shun preservatives, fragrances and certain ingredients found in sunscreen, such as oxybenzone, a possible hormone disruptor. Other women, like Loretz, go through their entire pregnancy with their makeup bag completely unaltered. >>

BAG CHECK

"My recommendation is for a woman to bring in her bag of personal care products to review what she's using [and] decide what she should cut out," says Joshua Zeichner, MD. Your practitioner can help determine what's safe and what to put on hold.





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Beauty

Beauty after birth

Just because baby has finally arrived doesn't mean you can go back to your prepregnancy skin care regimen just yet. If you're breastfeeding, you'll need to run any medications or treatments by your care provider—that's because anything that passes through your bloodstream can be passed onto your nursling through your breast milk. The off-limits lists for expectant and nursing moms vary slightly, so double-check on anything questionable to ensure both you and your wee one stay safe.

Treatments

Steer clear of topical retinoids (a vitamin A medication commonly found in antiaging treatments), as they have been associated with birth defects. Other ingredients to watch out for are salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide, which can be found in many over-the-counter antiaging products.

Botox and fillers are definite no-no's, and Zeichner recommends avoiding laser treatments as well. "If there's a burn to the skin [or] if there's an infection—some adverse event that needs to be treated—that can have an effect on the pregnancy," he cautions.

An excellent and safe antiaging alternative is topical vitamin C due to its antioxidant properties, which work to calm inflammation of the skin caused by free radicals. The use of vitamin C is linked to improvements in skin tone, texture, fine lines and pigmentation.

Some safe skin correction lines to consider include SkinCeuticals, RoC Multi Correxion, Indie Lee and Manuka Doctor.

Medications

Changes during pregnancy put hormones into overdrive, causing fluctuations in the oil glands. As a result, pregnant women can suffer from serious acne. Unfortunately, many prescription acne medications are not safe during pregnancy, and more studies are necessary to determine the safety of over-the-counter acne treatments.

tip

Exercise the same amount of caution with over-the-counter products as you do with prescription ones as they are still considered drugs.

If you struggle with acne, talk to your dermatologist or practitioner about topical antibiotics like clindamycin and erythromycin, both FDA pregnancy category B (see sidebar on opposite page). A topical product called finacea, typically a treatment for rosacea, can also be used to help reduce acne-related inflammation.

Eczema and psoriasis are two other skin conditions regularly controlled with medication. "Both inflammatory rashes ... are commonly treated with topical cortisone creams," Zeichner says. He recommends holding off on cortisone creams, particularly during the first trimester, and substituting moisturizing products instead.

CHECK IT OUT

Not sure which of your skin care products make the grade? The Personal Care Products Council has a searchable directory of products and ingredients, as well as the science and safety behind them, at cosmeticsinfo.org. You can also look through the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep database for safety ratings on over 64,000 cosmetic products at ewg.org/skindeep.



Hair and nails

One of the most common questions pregnant woman have is "Can I get my hair colored?" It's also one of the "don'ts" you'll hear frequently from well-meaning co-workers and girlfriends.

There's really nothing to back up the claim that dye and other hair products are harmful during pregnancy. In fact, these products—like other cosmetics—are rigorously tested for safety.

Researchers took a look at hair stylists to determine risks posed by hair products during pregnancy and lactation. And as authors Tara Haelle and Emily Willingham report in their book *The Informed Parent: A Science-Based Resource for Your Child's First Four Years*, they "found no evidence that congenital anomalies, poor pregnancy outcomes or children's developmental problems" were linked to them.

Our experts agree that most topical nail products, such as polishes and lotions are probably fine. New evidence does suggest, however, that exposure to chemicals commonly used in nail salons may carry higher risk. "Obviously you want your salon to be well-ventilated," says Loretz.

If you plan to keep up with your salon treatments, Ashby recommends waiting until after the first trimester.

Still concerned? Switch to a henna-based dye or a nontoxic nail polish for the time being, suggests Zeichner. You may also want to trade in your hair spray for gel or mousse to avoid phthalates, which some animal studies have linked to sexual development interference in males.

Far and away the best thing you can do if you're concerned about skin care and beauty product safety during pregnancy is consult your dermatologist or health care provider. "Every situation is a little bit different," Zeichner says, "and you have to discuss the risks and the benefits."

P&N

How do your skin medications measure up?

In December 2014, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) developed a new system for categorizing medications based on their risk to the fetus during pregnancy, but it will take several years to fully implement. In the meantime, here's a list of the current pregnancy categories and what they mean ...

► **CATEGORY A:** Well-controlled studies have shown that drugs in this category pose no risks to the fetus at any time during the pregnancy. Unfortunately, very few medications fall under this category.

► **CATEGORY B:** These drugs have not been seen to pose risk to the fetus either in animal studies or observational studies of pregnant women. Examples: *clindamycin, erythromycin, finacea*

► **CATEGORY C:** Adverse effects in the fetus have been found in animal studies, but there have been no well-controlled human studies. Or there's a lack of strong data from either animal or human studies, leaving the risks of taking the drug unknown. Examples: *benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid*

► **CATEGORY D:** Past studies have shown fetal risk in animals and humans; however, the benefits of taking the drug may outweigh the potential risks. Example: *methotrexate*

► **CATEGORY X:** These are medications you should avoid at all costs during pregnancy and lactation. Examples: *isotretinoin (Accutane), tretinoin (Retin-A)*

► **CATEGORY N:** The drug has not yet been classified by the FDA.

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