

# Safe for Baby

Alison Yarnold counsels

a pregnant client on how to maintain a safe beauty regime

**P**regnancy is one of those times when you really need to take the weight off your feet and be pampered. As we all know, being stressed isn't good for the baby – so what better excuse than being pregnant for some nurturing time.

However, before you race to the salon (or slowly walk or waddle as you expand), there are a few things you will need to consider if you want to book in for a spa or salon treatment when you're 'expecting' – and not just the size of the towels and the paper knickers!

Firstly, and most importantly, when visiting the salon make it known that you are pregnant, don't be tempted to keep quiet... sometimes even specialist pregnancy treatments are only recommended after the first 12 weeks.

In the first trimester you're probably not be feeling your best, even feeling a little sick. However, treating yourself to a facial, or getting a pedicure (you'll enjoy this later on when you can't see your feet!), having a manicure or a tension-busting neck and shoulder massage, will go a long way to making you feel better and getting that 'pregnancy glow'.

Later on in the pregnancy when you have slightly expanded in size you can book in for a special pregnancy massage and treatment to help ease that back discomfort and make the most of being pampered while you're doing all the 'hard work'. Many salons and spas make a fuss of pregnant clients, with tailored treatments that are designed to relax, and de-stress expectant mums. What's good for mum is good for baby.

Nine months is a long time. For many women, this span marks the end of long-time beauty regimens. Some feel desperation, sometimes even anger at the changes going on in their bodies. Some blame their husbands for their ruined figure. However, some things do bounce back and what stays changed is your rite of passage to being a mother.

If we wish to prevent bad skin from happening, then we should definitely do something to keep it from happening. Being desperate and lashing out at everyone for your bad skin will not help. The keyword here is 'adaptation'. How does one adapt?

## TO GET THAT PREGNANCY GLOW

### Facials

A professional facial can work wonders when it comes to clearing pores clogged by extra oil – the result of those crazy hormones. But in addition to being oily (or dry or a combination of both) your skin is extra-sensitive during pregnancy, so keep that in mind if you're scheduling a facial. Avoid abrasive treatments (such as microdermabrasion), which may do more harm than good right now.

Here are some fabulous facial options:

Oxygen facials can increase circulation, promote cellular renewal, and plump out fine lines and wrinkles (in case you need even more plumping).

Deep-cleansing facials typically involve exfoliation, extraction, massage, a mask, and moisturising. If you have been breaking out like a teenager, this can help (though no facial can truly vanquish the effects of those pimple-producing hormones).

Hydrating facials use moisture-rich treatments and products to drench pregnancy-parched skin.

## FOR TIRED FEET AND HANDS

### Pedicures/manicures

What is it about painted toenails and beautiful healthy fingernails that make a woman feel so beautiful? Even on my worst hair days, I feel pretty. This is an important concept for pregnant women – especially in those early months (when all you can concentrate on is keeping dry crackers down), and even in the later months (when the only reason our feet enter our minds is because they hurt so much). But... are pedicures safe during pregnancy?

Yes they are safe... just remember to have your treatment in a well-ventilated room. Chemicals such as nail-polish remover can be quite strong smelling and can make you feel quite light-headed and nauseous.

Then there is the BIG question: can I have my pedi on a pedi chair that massages and vibrates. In best practice I recommend that you do not have your pedi performed on the vibration chair in the first 12 weeks, but then

after that if there are no other complications it is a fantastic way to relax and pamper yourself before the big day.

Additionally, having a relaxing manicure is highly recommended. You will find that your fingernails will grow quickly; the nail will become strong and healthy. The only area of concern when having a mani or pedi treatment would be if your therapist didn't know you were pregnant and suggests a paraffin treatment. It is best to stay away from paraffin in the first 12 weeks, as paraffin contains essential oils; while some oils are safe for pregnant women, others are not (more later).

## TO RELAX THE BODY

Pregnancy brings with it a variety of side effects, some less pleasant than others. All pregnant women can expect to experience at least a little stiffness and muscular tension during their pregnancy as their uterus expands to accommodate their growing baby. Fortunately there is a simple and effective way to not only treat some of the side effects of pregnancy but also leave you feeling great. Massage therapy during pregnancy can often relieve many of the common side effects of pregnancy, whether you suffer from backaches, headaches, oedema or other pregnancy related problems.

### Prenatal Massage

This is gaining in popularity as pregnant women begin recognising the benefits it has to offer women. Back pain is one of the more common side effects of pregnancy and can continue throughout, and even after. If you have to carry around other small children you may find your symptoms exacerbated during pregnancy.

For many pregnant women, getting a massage is an excellent way to relax and rejuvenate. Massage must not be performed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. However, if you are more than 20 weeks into your pregnancy, it's best not to lie flat on your back. Instead, prop a pillow under your right hip when you lie down. This tips the uterus off the great blood vessels, which lie at the back of your abdomen just to the right of your spine,

and protects them from being compressed. When it comes to lying face down, many massage therapists offer a table made especially for pregnant women that has a cut-out in the middle for your enlarging belly. If this type of table isn't available, it is best not to lie completely on your stomach (for obvious reasons). Instead, lie on your side or straddle a chair for this portion of the massage.

Here are just a few of the other benefits prenatal massage has to offer:

Relieves oedema or swelling by stimulating circulation throughout the body.

Reduces leg cramps and swelling in the legs.

Relaxes anxiety during pregnancy.

Promotes more restful sleep and helps prevent pregnancy related insomnia.

May relax your baby, particularly if you have your abdomen gently stroked.

It is vital however that you seek the assistance of a qualified professional who offers massage during pregnancy. Massaging the wrong areas or focusing on certain acupressure points may actually trigger uterine contractions in some women. Fortunately massage therapists trained in prenatal massage know what to avoid and where to focus. Towards the end of your pregnancy you might consider a prenatal massage to relax you during labour or even help strengthen your contractions.

### Aromatherapy

Many massage therapists use aromatherapy oils during a massage session. While many aromatherapy oils are safe to use during pregnancy, others are contraindicated. Again, be sure you consult with a qualified massage therapist so you do not end up inhaling oils that may be contraindicated during pregnancy. Some women find essential oils off-putting, particularly during their first trimester. No matter how much you yearn to try aromatherapy during your pregnancy DO NOT do it, especially during the first trimester. The foetus is at its most vulnerable and although it is not proven that this complementary therapy can cause a miscarriage, it's not worth the risk. If this is the case just let your massage therapist know ahead of time so you can enjoy a fragrance-free massage therapy session.





There are some essential oils that are beneficial during pregnancy. Many can help relieve anxiety and tension while still others are useful for relieving bloating and headaches. Here is a list of essential oils that may be helpful during pregnancy:

Tangerine, Lemon, Tea Tree, Ylang-ylang and Mandarin.

Other essential oils including the following should be avoided during pregnancy for their contraction stimulating properties:

Arnica, Clary sage, Fennel, Jasmine, Juniper, Cedarwood, Geranium, Eucalyptus, Frankincense, Rosemary, Geranium, and Myrrh.

### Body treatments

While the idea of a body treatment might sound heavenly, body treatments such as mud baths and seaweed wraps need to be avoided, as they raise the body temperature. This can be dangerous for both you and the baby. In addition, avoid steam rooms, saunas, hot tubs and hot baths. The heat used in these treatments make you lose body fluids (dehydrate) and become over heated.

### The electrical equipment debate

When you are pregnant, most machines that emit an electrical current are a big no no! However, there is one in particular that is of great benefit. The Vacuum Suction Machine is brilliant, especially on the body. What the Vac Suc machine is able to do is move lymph and toxins out of the body, aiding with the dispersion of fluid retention and oedema in the legs and ankle. The treatment is non evasive and no electrical current is transmitted into the body, as the machine is run on a vacuum suction pump. The machine is extremely relaxing and can be performed up to three times a week.

## THE ESSENTIALS

### Hair removal

Plucking and shaving are safe during pregnancy, but other hair removal treatments may not be.

If pregnancy has you looking like a resident of Planet of the Apes, stay calm – this hairy situation is only temporary. Your armpits, bikini line, upper lip, even your belly may be fuzzier than usual due to all those raging hormones. But think twice before you turn to lasers, electrolysis, depilatories and bleaching. No reliable studies have been done to determine for sure whether these popular treatments are harmful, but it's probably best to skip them until after you give birth. Take heart, though, you may pluck or shave (carefully!) to your heart's content. Even waxing is fine if your skin's not too sensitive.

Particularly avoid bleaches and depilatories (hair removal creams) while you are pregnant, as your skin absorbs these products, which may enter the bloodstream. While this has not been proven to be harmful it is best avoided if in any doubt.

Lastly, electrolysis is not recommended because it's not known how the electrical current might affect the newborn baby.

### Tinting

When it comes to having your eyelashes and eyebrows tinted, there is a lot of misunderstanding as to whether or not it is safe. Many pregnant women have their hair dyed with no hesitation. It is always best to speak to your professional therapist and tell them you are pregnant, especially in the first 12 weeks. As a professional, I recommend that pregnant clients have a patch test before the treatment. If there is no reaction to the patch test, it is then safe to go ahead. Always remember that your body is going through enormous hormonal changes when you are pregnant so it is best to be safe then sorry.

## THE THINGS TO AVOID

### Injectables

Botox, collagen, and other injectable line fillers are off-limits during pregnancy.

A wrinkly baby is cute; a wrinkly mommy is not. But before you start (or keep up)

treating those fine lines, read the fine print on your products. If it contains vitamin A, vitamin K, or BHA (beta-hydroxy acid or salicylic acid), you might need to bid it a fond farewell for a while. Most practitioners will green-light products containing AHA (alpha-hydroxy acid), but do check first. And keep in mind that AHA products can make your already sun-sensitive pregnancy skin even more vulnerable to the damaging effects of the sun's rays. Sunscreen (SPF 30+) is your friend now (and every day), so wear it daily, even when there are more clouds than sun. Not only will you protect your skin, you'll ward off wrinkles more effectively than any cream at any price. Is Botox safe? The jury's out – so why take a chance? Try to love the skin you're in, at least until after you deliver and finish nursing.

Oh, and if you're thinking of stopping by your dermatologist's office for a fill (or a refill) of collagen, Restylane, or Perlane, forget it. As with Botox, the safety of injectable line fillers during pregnancy hasn't been established through studies yet, which means you're better off staying unfilled for now. Besides, you may find that normal pregnancy fluid retention may plump up your face nicely, leaving your wrinkles less noticeable without the help of cosmetic procedures. So turn that frown upside down. As for filling out your lips, try overdrawing your lips slightly with a lip-coloured pencil, switching to a lighter shade of lipstick, and adding a touch of gloss right in the centre of your lower lip.

Finally, enjoy this time to pamper yourself and prepare yourself for the joy ahead.

In the next issue, we will give you some tips on how to keep yourself healthy during pregnancy and, the home treatments that you can still do yourself or even better get someone else to do.

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