

SKINCARE SOS

Sarah Dawson CUTS THROUGH THE CONFUSION AND ASKS THE EXPERTS WHAT BEAUTY PRODUCTS ARE AND AREN'T SAFE TO USE DURING PREGNANCY

If you're wondering when on earth that elusive pregnancy glow is going to turn up, you're not alone. Growing a baby can take its toll on your skin and, thanks to the hormones rushing through your body, you might end up reliving your teenage years battling spots or entering a whole new world of pigmentation. Of course, you want to look after your skin during pregnancy, but, as is the case with food and drink, there are certain skincare ingredients and treatments that get the thumbs down over the next nine months.

WHAT SHOULD I AVOID?
“First and foremost, retinol is a big no-no and should be avoided by anyone who is pregnant

found in acne and spot treatments, as well as exfoliators. “Again, in small doses and in topical treatments, this is generally believed to be OK,” explains Dr Denning. “But, my view is that if there’s no acute need, then it’s better to avoid during pregnancy.”
If you’re planning a relaxing massage with essential oils, make sure you do your research first. “Essential oils are often a go-to for women who are looking for natural benefits,” says Dr Denning, “but it’s important to realise that not all oils are good for pregnancy. For instance, rosemary can increase blood pressure and high concentrations of clove, clary sage, cinnamon and rosemary could induce contractions. The good thing is that

SKIN IS MORE SENSITIVE DURING PREGNANCY, SO LOOK FOR GENTLE PRODUCTS TO DO THE JOB

or breastfeeding,” explains expert facialist Kate Kerr (katekerrlondon.co.uk). Retinol, retinyl palmitate and retinoic acid (all containing vitamin A derivatives) can be found in many anti-ageing skincare products, so it’s time to start checking the label on your favourite serums and creams. Dr Aarti Denning, a leading medical aesthetic doctor (reverse-time.com) and private GP, says “Some studies have shown that high doses of vitamin A and Retin-A during pregnancy can be harmful to an unborn child, and although the amount of retinol that gets absorbed through the skin with topical treatments is minimal, we don’t want to take that risk.”
Another skincare ingredient it is recommended to avoid is salicylic acid – often

camomile, ylang ylang and lavender are all considered safe after the first trimester.”
Can’t live without your faux glow? Then think about switching to a DHA-free tanner during pregnancy. Because there are no studies on whether using DHA is safe while pregnancy, it’s recommended to avoid if you can. There are some fantastic brands offering DHA-free self-tanning products, so just check the label before you buy.
WHAT SHOULD I USE?
If the thought of ditching your anti-ageing creams and serums for a whole nine months brings you out in a cold sweat, don’t panic! There are some really effective alternatives to retinol that are still safe to use while pregnant,

such as vitamin C and peptides. “Continuing to use skincare products loaded with antioxidants and skin-repairing ingredients is highly recommended,” says Dr Denning. “Just be sure to check with your doctor or midwife and follow their advice.”
Thanks to those pregnancy hormones, pigmentation is a common concern – in particular melasma, often referred to as ‘the mask of pregnancy’. “This can appear as deep patches, commonly around the under-eye area or chin,” explains Kate Kerr. “It’s activated by the sun, so I advise my clients to be vigilant with SPF use throughout pregnancy to limit the development and appearance.” Dr Denning agrees; “The most important skincare

to use during pregnancy is sunscreen. Just make sure it’s SPF 30 or over.”
Skin is more sensitive during pregnancy, so look for gentle products that do the job.
WHAT ABOUT COSMETIC TREATMENTS?
If you’re a fan of Botox and fillers, it’s advised to give these a rest during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. If you’re desperate for a safe way to boost your complexion, Dr Denning has a suggestion. “One of my most popular treatments for clients during pregnancy, is micro needling. It’s a minimally invasive procedure, where we create tiny punctures in the skin using micro-fine needles. This triggers

the body’s wound-healing process, stimulating collagen and elastin production.”
ANYTHING ELSE I NEED TO KNOW?
It always pays to be overly cautious with your skincare during pregnancy and Dr Denning has this advice. “If you’re doubtful about a product or ingredient, it’s best not to use it. You can always make a list of the beauty and skincare products you use and review them with your midwife or your doctor. There are many skincare products that are 100 per cent fine to use while pregnant, so you can still look after your skin as well as your baby throughout your pregnancy.”

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