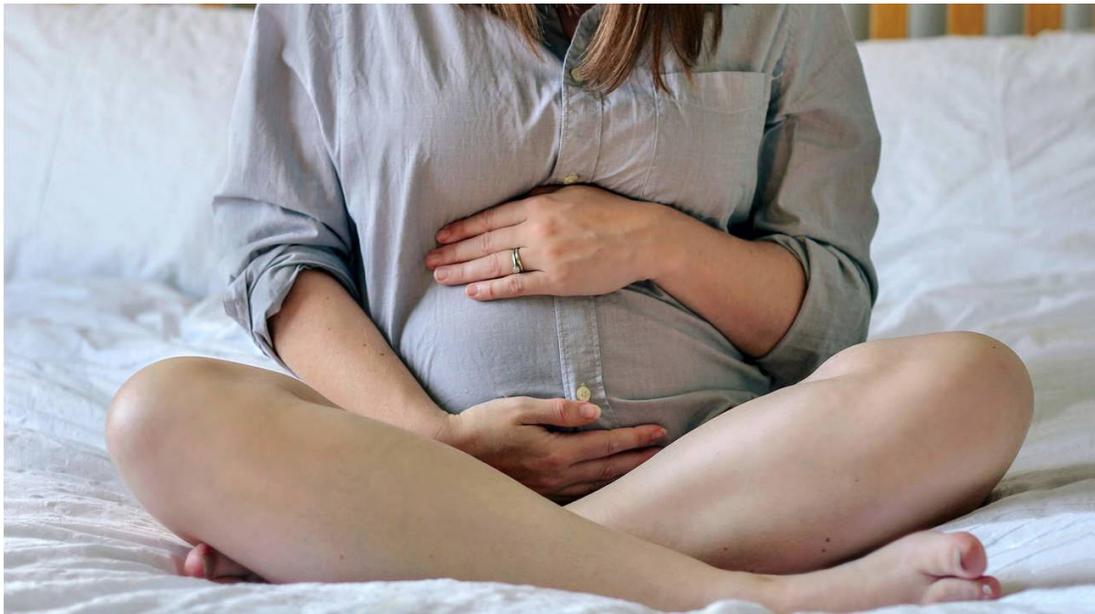


Health

How to Safely Treat Acne When You're Pregnant, According to Dermatologists



By: Kathleen Felton | 6 August 2018

Acne during pregnancy can be frustrating, especially since certain common skincare ingredients, such as salicylic acid and benzoyl peroxide, aren't recommended. Here are alternate ways to tackle pregnancy breakouts.

If you're pregnant and plagued by breakouts, shopping for spot treatments suddenly becomes very confusing. Most dermatologists and ob-gyns recommend their pregnant patients steer clear of skincare products that contain salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide, but these common pimple-fighters are featured in most over-the-counter acne products.

"Both of these ingredients are considered Pregnancy Category C," explains Purvisha Patel, MD, a dermatologist based in Tennessee and the founder of Visha Skincare. The term means that while there aren't enough well-controlled studies on the ingredients in humans, they have been shown to have adverse reactions on fetuses in animal studies. "Knowing this, they are generally avoided or used in very small concentrations," Dr. Patel says.

To further complicate your acne-fighting plan, other ingredients such as willow bark, the chemical bleaching agent hydroquinone, retinol, and prescription retinoids are also off-limits when you're trying to get pregnant or expecting. (Sadly, this means that Differin, one of the most popular over-the-counter acne treatments, is also not an option.)

How to deal with pregnancy acne

"It does seem grossly unfair to need to adjust to a changing body as well as skin that may have been clear since your teen years, and now you're breaking out all over again as if you were 14," says **Ava Shamban, MD**, a Beverly Hills dermatologist and founder of SKIN FIVE.

The good news? Many women will notice their acne improving as they near their due date. "In general, [it] is most prominent in the first trimester," Dr. Shamban says. "As estrogen levels rise in the rest of the pregnancy, the acne will clear."

You're not doomed to live with breakouts until then, though. While there are pregnancy-safe acne treatments out there, a closer look at the ingredients list is often necessary—salicylic acid in particular tends to pop up in a wide range of formulas, both in products marketed for acne and others you might not necessarily expect it to be in, such as some moisturizers and concealers.

Below are five dermatologist-approved ingredients that can help fight breakouts and are generally deemed safe for moms-to-be. Always speak to your ob-gyn before adding a new ingredient to your routine, however, and schedule an appointment with your dermatologist if over-the-counter treatments don't seem to be working; a topical antibiotic or in-office procedure such as a light glycolic peel or acne facial could help, too.

1 Azelaic acid



This pregnancy-safe ingredient does double-duty by "killing the bacteria that cause acne and keeping pores clean," says Debra Jaliman, MD, a New York City-based dermatologist. It can also help brighten dark spots from pregnancy-induced melasma. The only problem? Many azelaic acid treatments also have salicylic acid on their ingredients list, making it tricky to find one that works for moms-to-be. Not The Ordinary Azelaic Acid Suspension 10%, though: This lightweight gel-cream will help fight breakouts and simultaneously brighten skin.

2 Glycolic acid



Exfoliation helps keep your complexion clear by sloughing off dead skin cells, which can contribute to breakouts. Enter glycolic acid: "It softens lines and makes skin smoother and can also help with melasma," says Dr. Jaliman. We're big fans of Drunk Elephant T.L.C. Framboos Glycolic Night Serum ("It transformed my skin," raved one Health staffer). Bonus: With the exception of BabyFacial, the entire Drunk Elephant line is OK during pregnancy.

3 Clay



Clay has been used for thousands of years to heal skin, and tried-and-true clay masks "can benefit almost any skin type," says Joyce Imahiyero-Ip, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Massachusetts. "Clay works to unclog and shrink the appearance of pores and regulate sebum production (excessive sebum production is linked to acne), and leaves skin feeling softer and smoother."

There's a long list of incredible clay masks out there, but Dr. Imahiyero-Ip is partial to HydroPeptide's Miracle Mask. "It's formulated with kaolin and bentonite clays to extract impurities and enable skin to control oil more effectively on its own," she says.

4 Charcoal



Clay isn't the only mask you can add to your arsenal. "Charcoal masks can help with oily skin," says Dr. Patel. She likes Neutrogena's Deep Clean Purifying Wash-Off Clay Face Mask. The one-use, portable pods are ideal for jet-setting mamas-to-be.

5 Vitamin C



In a previous interview with Health, dermatologist Deanne Robinson, MD, recommended vitamin C as one of the best pregnancy-safe ingredients to tackle environmental damage and boost collagen synthesis. But this powerful antioxidant can also do wonders for one of the more annoying side effects of pregnancy acne: brown spots. "Many times, [pregnancy] pimples can leave behind a brown stain, which can be frustrating," says Dr. Shamban.

For a tried-and-true fix, try Ole Henriksen Truth Serum, one of our favorite vitamin C serums. The brand's True-C Complex tackles hyperpigmentation, while aloe vera and orange and green tea extracts keep skin soft and supple.

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