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Stretch Marks in Pregnancy (Striae gravidarum)

By Martha Fitzharris

Striae gravidarum or Stretch marks are purplish red streaky scars, which appear when the skin is

overstretched. They appear during pregnancy over the abdomen where the skin is supple, usually in the third trimester or the later months when the skin is highly stretched to accommodate the growing fetus. They may also appear over the breast, more so during the period of breast-feeding when the breasts swell up and increase much in size. Apart from these areas, striae are also seen on the hips, buttock and inner and outer thigh.

About 70–90% of pregnant women develop stretch marks over the abdomen. Up to 90% of women develop stretch marks over some part of their body due to the excess weight gain of pregnancy. Most light skinned women have pinkish colored striae and the dark skinned have striae that are lighter than the surrounding area. Most women start to worry about striae or stretch marks after they have their baby.

A little attention to the rate of weight gain and skin stretch during the pregnancy period can definitely go a long way in reducing them. The more weight gained during pregnancy, the more likely are you to develop them. In some women, changes in weight are drastic and happen very rapidly causing a sudden stretch of the skin and the dermal protein tissues tears. This initially appears pinkish and later fades to a white silvery scar, which remains as a stretch mark. Women who have big babies or women with a twin or multiple pregnancy have more chances of having striae as their skin is stretched more due to the bulk of space needed to accommodate more than one fetus.

The likelihood of having striae increases if you had them during the pubertal period or in a previous pregnancy, if you gain weight more than what is recommended, or if your body is in a general malnourishment status. Women who have a lot of striae should report this to their doctor as they might be prone to having more vaginal lacerations and tears during a normal vaginal delivery. This is due to dermal matrix with a weak protein framework as is suggested by the large number of striae or deeper indented striae on the abdomen.

Skin over the abdomen is supple and has an underneath fat deposition. Sudden loss of weight after the baby is born makes the skin loose and striae appear prominent at that time, which is when most

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women start worrying about them. Normally after pregnancy, these stretch marks fade away slowly as the body comes back to normalcy and is repairing all the tissues. Usually after 12 months post partum these marks do fade away and are much lighter than before.

Steps to take for Prevention

- To avoid stretch marks over the breasts, try wearing a supportive maternity bra specially made to give extra support for the heavier breasts during pregnancy and in the lactation period.
- Topical creams containing retinol or retinoic acid/ Retin-A should be avoided during pregnancy and after pregnancy as their safety during the lactation period is not well studied.
- Eat a good nutritious diet and avoid fattening foods, stretch marks can also result from nutritional deficiency. Eat food rich in proteins, as this would strengthen the protein framework of elastin and collagen in the skin.

Be sure to consume food that promote skin health:

–Zinc–rich foods such as nuts or fish

–Foods high in vitamins A, C, D, such as carrots, citrus fruits and milk.

–Protein–rich foods (such as eggs).

· You can always prevent stretch marks with exercise and water; make sure you are maintaining healthy skin! Mama always told you to drink plenty of water. Maybe she knew this: it helps prevent stretch marks, too! Proper water intake keeps your skin soft and less likely to develop stretch marks. Caffeine can increase your risk of stretch marks. If you're stuck on your caffeinated coffee or tea, make sure you balance the fluids. Drink just as much – or more – water as you drink coffee, tea or soda.

Many women use moisturizers and lotions, during their pregnancy to prevent stretch marks and worry about them constantly. Most creams in the market only provide temporary moisture that lasts for a few hours, and thus not enough to prevent stretch marks.

Search the market for the best topical creams, those containing biological activators of skin renewal, for they also get rid of damaged proteins within your skin and promote the production of glycosaminoglycans, the true moisture holding molecules within your skin.

Glycosaminoglycans play a critical role as shock absorbers, to provide binding, hydrating and swelling pressure to tissues, enabling them to withstand compressional forces and thus prevent tearing and scarring of the deep layers of the skin during pregnancy outgrowth, growth spurts during adolescence, overstretching by body building (in association with steroids) or over stretching by more than average weight gain. They also play a vital role in cell proliferation, migration and adhesion.

Enjoy your pregnancy rather than worrying about it. Instead, concentrate on gaining the recommended

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amount of weight, between 25 – 34 pounds, in a graded manner. Remember that pregnancy is a wonderful and joyful period in a woman's life, meant for enjoyment.

Treatment Options for Stretch Marks

There are several treatment options for stretch marks. If you are serious about getting ride of those unwanted stretch marks, it's best to be in the care of a surgeon or dermatologist who can recommend your best options. Some medications can cause stretch marks like hormones and steroids, so it's always best to be honest with your doctor so he can take a detailed medical history, including the medications you are actually taking so he can provide you the best treatment for these ugly marks.

However, there are two main methods for getting ride of stretch marks; surgical Methods and natural methods which involve lotions and creams.

Surgical Methods

Dermabrasion or chemical peel can be used to address unwanted stretch marks. Micro-dermabrasion can also help. It is a skin-freshening technique that helps repair skin conditions. The

micro-dermabrasion technique abrades the skin with a high-pressure flow of crystals, which stimulates the formation of new collagen and elastin. This causes the attenuated epidermis to heal more effectively, making stretch marks heal and become much less noticeable.

There are new advances in laser surgeries, they are much expensive but also very effective if used during the early stages. Dermatologists use a pulsed dye laser to fade red marks.

The latest laser method used by the specialist can fade away mature light-colored marks. This type of therapy requires multiple treatments. Also, some pain may be involved, although it's minimal. A few patients with darker skin tones have been reported to have some post-procedure pigmentary alteration, which is usually temporary.

The degree of success with any of these treatment will be impacted by your age, your skin tone and even your diet. It's important to note that insurance coverage probably will not cover stretch mark removal because it is a cosmetic procedure (even if the stretch marks are particularly severe).

Lotions and Creams

There are plenty over-the-counter treatments for stretch marks. In early stages, when stretch marks are still pinkish, apply several moisturizing creams and oils to make them less intense while they are maturing. Massage the area daily with body oil. Olive oil is said to be the best. Vaseline also works, any cream rich in vitamin E, different types of butter, cocoa butter, coconut butter and shea butter being the best.

If you are a woman who is pregnant and you are concerned with stretch marks, let your physician know before you want to begin preventative treatment before your stomach starts growing. Often, your

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physician can recommend creams.

These stretch marks treatments may, or may not be effective, according to your skin's complexion and the extent of the damage. If you are planning to take drastic measures consult a dermatologist and be informed of the cost, effectiveness of the preferred method and side effects, if any. Some of the products designed to remove stretch marks contain very potent ingredients. These ingredients are not superfluous, but are necessary to cause dramatic results. The only problem with these ingredients is that they can cause negative reactions in some people. If you are sensitive to chemicals, you may want to opt for a natural stretch mark removal product.

Fortunately, there's a new product that uses only natural ingredients to prevent and restore damaged skin and it can be used like a daily skin regenerating activator. Bio Skin Care is made with a natural substance gathered from a little creature that nature has endowed with the ability to repair his skin quickly when damaged.

Bio Skin Care utilizes biological activators of your own body's skin growth factors to prevent and eliminate stretch marks (stria atrophica, striae distensae). It dissolves damaged collagen skin cells, triggers the renewal of collagen and elastin and the production of glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) and proteoglycans from within the deep layers of the skin.

And the best of all is that it doesn't have side effects, it is safe for children and pregnant women, can be used under the eyes and continued as a daily skin care routine indefinitely. Also yields a soft skin after shaving. Helps to heal razor burns and prevent ingrown hairs.

With the use of BIO SKIN CARE™ Cream damaged cells and toxins are dissolved, hair follicles are cleaned of debris, germs are destroyed, new collagen, elastin and water holding cells are formed. The Final Result: YOUR SKIN CLEAR OF STRETCH MARKS.

Martha Fitzharris is a free lance journalist for

<http://www.naturalbioskincare.com>

a website offering a

new biological natural skin care product that activates skin renewal.

If you want more information about Stretch marks, please clic natural skin care cream with natural skin renewal activators.

Successful Prevention of Stretch Marks

By Martha Fitzharris

Prevention of stretch marks is important to teenagers in the awkward years of puberty, body builders

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who are packing on muscle at a quick rate and women who are expecting babies. In short, anyone who is growing quickly is apt to incur stretch marks. The swelling of the belly during pregnancy just happens to be the most extreme example of the adult human body growing quickly.

The use of anti stretch mark creams is the best method for the prevention of stretch marks. Successful prevention depends on the intensity of the cream. Mere moisturizers, like cocoa butter, offer minimum protection against stretch marks, also known as striae. Creams that contain trace amounts of collagen and elastin or that are packed with them do no more than temporarily attract moisture to the skin and can not be more effective than cocoa butter creams in preventing striae. The only effective creams for the prevention and repair of stretch marks are those that contain biological substances that signal your body to reproduce collagen and elastin at a quick pace and to dissolve damaged skin cells.

Why are elastin and collagen creams no more effective than mere moisturizing creams? Collagen and elastin are proteins which occur naturally in the skin. Collagen is, in fact, the building block of our skin. It gives skin the ability to bind. Elastin is another very important protein found in our skin, which gives it its elasticity. Both must be built from within your body, and not merely "added" to your skin. Adding bovine collagen or elastin levels to your body from the outside do no more than temporarily attract moisture to your skin as any protein binds to water in a proportion of about four times its weight. Mere water within the skin does not equip the skin to avoid tearing when over-stretched.

Striae are caused when the skin is pushed beyond its ability to stretch, so that it actually tears. These tears are replaced with rippled, discolored scar tissue, known as stretch marks. If you can prevent the tears from happening by giving the skin a greater ability to stretch, you won't get stretch marks. Rubbing on a cream loaded with biological activators that signal your body to reproduce collagen and elastin quickly is the easiest and best way to give the skin elasticity.

Successful Prevention of Skin Damage with Biological Activators

There are three types of biological activators: (1) enzymes that catalyze or speed up biochemical reactions within skin cells and digest or dissolve damaged or worn out cells, (2) growth factor proteins which enable cells to communicate and effectively coordinate activities between one another for orderly cell reproduction or division, and (3) glycosaminoglycans (GAGs), which are complex carbohydrate chains that provide binding, hydrating and swelling pressure to tissues enabling them to withstand compressional forces and successfully prevent tearing and scarring in the deep layers of the skin during pregnancy outgrowth, growth spurts during adolescence, overstretching by body building (in association with steroids) or over stretching by more than average weight gain. With the use of BIO SKIN CARE™ Cream damaged cells and toxins are dissolved, hair follicles are cleaned of debris, germs are destroyed, new collagen, elastin and water holding cells are formed. The Final Result: **YOUR SKIN CLEAR OF STRETCH MARKS.**

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