

Red-hot mamas

Your skin has to cope with a lot when you're expecting. Happily, there are specialist products designed to keep you looking swell from here to maternity – and beyond...

Pregnancy can be a stressful time, especially for your skin. After all, there aren't many times in your life when your skin is stretched as tight as a drum over an ever-growing baby bump. Then, after the birth, there's the psychological pressure for your tummy to snap back into shape like a pair of Spanx pants the minute you leave the maternity unit. As if this weren't enough, some women notice their skin is dryer than usual during pregnancy, while others complain of oilier skin and even spots.

Thankfully, there is plenty you can do to keep your skin looking great through those crucial nine months. Often it's simply a case of making minor adjustments to your usual skincare and pampering routine. And the array of new-generation specialist pregnancy skin treats make this easier than ever.

Blooming gorgeous

As we all know, during pregnancy your hormones go into overdrive, and by 40 weeks the amount of oestrogen in the bloodstream will have more than tripled compared with before you were pregnant. This can have a dramatic effect on your skin – but just how it affects you is largely down to your genes. So if your mother bloomed during pregnancy, the chances are that you will do, too. But if she remembers nine months of dry skin, stretch marks and

fluid retention to take action.

The good thing about their complexion during pregnancy is that there is a so-called "flush" – hormones naturally help you cope with the changes in circulating hormones.

At the same time, it encourages water and tightens skin and wrinkles are noticeable. A healthy glow is achieved by using a pH-balanced body lotion in the bath or shower, and, if your face seems oilier than usual, a good quality, pregnancy-safe facial cleanser will help even things out.

At a stretch

Stretch marks tend to appear during the sixth or seventh month as your bump gets bigger and you put on weight. They are formed when collagen fibres in the skin tear and form tiny scars. There is not much you can do to prevent stretch marks forming, dermatologists say, but you can help minimise the damage by not putting on too much weight while you're expecting.

Between 25lb and 45lb is healthy, but if you are prone to stretch marks – you will know this from looking at your mum, sisters, or perhaps from personal experience during puberty – you should try to keep weight gain to a maximum of 30lb.

Additionally, massaging your bump with a vitamin-enriched cream or tummy massage gel will help keep the skin supple and the stretch marks



Bloom and Blossom Anti Stretch Mark Cream, £23 A rich lotion that helps skin maintain its elasticity. Dannii Minogue loves this. Visit bloomandblossom.com.

