

Description

Skin Care in Pregnancy and the Postnatal Period

Kerry Pollard (she/her) – Midwife and Senior Midwifery Lecturer

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Introduction

A great deal of advice around maintaining health is focused on nutrition and exercise – in particular what to do and what not to do. Little focus is on the importance of skin care. Just like the heart and lungs, the skin is an organ of the body. In fact it is the largest of all of the organs. It has many functions, many of which support us to maintain health and wellbeing through a complex eco system of the microbiome where it provides protections against pathogens, supports vitamin synthesis, metabolism and immune development.[1] In pregnancy, the body's organs undergo a myriad of physiological changes affecting each system differently.[2] There are three categories of skin conditions in pregnancy, benign hormone-related changes such as hyperpigmentation and striae gravidarum, pre-existing skin conditions, such as acne and psoriasis, and pregnancy-specific disorders such as atopic eruption of pregnancy.[3] Each will require different treatment or care to minimise discomfort or irritation.

> Supporting the skin in keeping its protective barrier functioning effectively can help protect against infection and pollutants.

Cautions with skin care

In today's society we often look for additional products to assist with keeping our skin healthy. The challenge we face is knowing what products are best for us. The skin care market can be overwhelming with many companies claiming their products can help with a multitude of skin complaints. Fortunately, in the UK we are governed by skin care regulations that enable cosmetic product safety.? However, it is important to be aware that as well as the impact of the change in hormones on the skin, some ingredients in products should be avoided as they can be absorbed by the skin and could pass in to the blood stream. For example, chemical sunscreens retinoids, hydroquinone, salicylic acid, formaldehyde, parabens and spironolactone.[5] Due to the ethical issues of clinical trials in pregnancy, reviews around the safety of topical products in pregnancy are limited.[6]

Benefits of skin care

Supporting the skin in keeping its protective barrier functioning effectively can help protect against infection and pollutants. Maintaining skin care through cleansing of the skin, exfoliation and moisturisation can help address early skin care complaints and minimise discomfort or complications. Such a process helps to keep the skin healthy and thus supports the protective barrier of the skin against environmental factors, irritants and pollutants. As well as the physical

benefits, this practice of selfcare also has a positive effect on holistic support and wellbeing for everyone.[7] **TSM**

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