

40 Ways to Get Rid of or Prevent Stretch Marks

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There are several myths surrounding stretch marks. They can happen to men and women, young and old. Stretch marks can happen anywhere on the body. There are many reasons stretch marks can develop, from physical changes to dietary changes to environmental factors. And for as many reasons that stretch marks are caused, they can be reduced in severity by several methods too.

Stretch marks occur when the skin loses its elasticity and collagen. When the elasticity is gone, the skin cannot "snap" back into place. Usually when it is pulled apart like that, the collagen is damaged too, which results in the difference in appearance of the stretch mark skin.

There are many things a person can do to prevent the development of stretch marks on their body. Some ways are by healthy living, other ways are by getting regular check ups from the doctor.

One major cause of stretch marks are from a pregnant body. The skin can only stretch so far without damaging. Thus, when baby stretches too far, the stretch marks are forever imprinted...or so you thought.

When pregnant:

1 - Cocoa Butter

Cocoa Butter hydrates and replenishes dry skin. There are many different quantities and qualities of cocoa butter creams in the store. Pick one brand and try it. If you like it and it seems to work, stick with it. Follow the package directions or rub once a day all over your tummy where stretch marks may develop. This is especially important when you reach the middle and last trimesters of your pregnancy. Cocoa butter can be used on any skin that is dry or flaky to rejuvenate it.

2 - Vitamin E

Vitamin E can be purchased by itself in a health food or supplements store. It is normally found in a gel or cream. It also hydrates the skin and gives it added elasticity. The added help to elasticity is what prevents future stretch marks from happening. Follow the directions on the package or use twice daily on your growing tummy.

3 - Control Weight Gain

Weight gain is important during pregnancy. However, how you gain the weight is the most important. Slow and steady growth, of one to two pounds per week is safest for you and the baby in the middle trimester. The weight gain should slow during the end. When the weight gain is rapid, the skin doesn't have a chance to stretch naturally. Stretch marks occur from skin that is pulled too tight too quickly. If you can moderate your diet and exercise, it will go a long way to helping control any stretch mark outbreaks.

4 – Enriched Drinks

You can purchase a mix in the health food stores. It is called Calc Fluor 6X. It is safe for you and the baby and contains many vitamins and nutrients to hydrate your body. Follow the package directions. It is suggested to use three times a day every week in your early trimester. Then once you hit midway, alternate weeks of using it. It helps build and repair your skin from the inside out.

5 - Drink lots of Water

Even with all of the products designed to keep you and your skin hydrated, water is still the best option. It is free and available everywhere. Drink eight glasses a day to keep your system flushed of toxins and your skin moisturized.

Creams & Lotions

Scientists have created many creams and lotions full of ingredients to help your skin. These ingredients build collagen and help with elasticity. The same lotions that help with stretch marks have the same effect on wrinkles. Therefore, the skin care products are a billion dollar industry!

6 – Copper

Copper is one of the essential ingredients needed for firm skin. It is used in almost every skincare product available. Products are being created now where copper is the main ingredient. Buying and using copper fortified skin care products builds firmness of the skin and makes it look younger. Toned and fortified skin won't stretch too fast, resulting in stretch marks. Rub all over where you may get (or want to get rid of) stretch marks: thighs, butt, hips, stomach and arms.

7 – Moisturizers

Moisturizers are available everywhere from dollar stores to luxury skin care chains. The price range is \$1 all the way up to thousands of dollars per ounce. Do they work better? Not necessarily. The important part is you take care of dry skin. The cream, no matter what quality, will have some vitamins and hydrating ingredients that you will benefit from. Keeping the skin moisturized will increase your chances of preventing the dreaded stretch mark.

8 - Retin –A Cream

Retin A cream is a type of moisturizer that prevents wrinkles and stretch marks on the skin. The Retin A is a protein used to build collagen in the skin. The belief is that adding this on top of your skin builds the collagen even further. The more collagen you have, the more elasticity your skin has too. With more elasticity, you have less wrinkles and stretch marks. The Retin A cream can be used as a preventative tool and also to combat existing wrinkles and stretch marks. Retin A creams can be moderate to expensive in price.

9 - Emu Oil

Using Emu Oil to treat stretch marks is one hot new trend in the skin care fight. It contains fatty acids, which have been found to help many skin ailments, not just stretch marks. It is an all-natural product that is healthy for every individual to use. The Emu Oil can be purchased in liquid form to drink, pills to take daily and as a cream to apply topically. The Emu Oil will repair any damaged skin and keep it healthy.

Another way to prevent stretch marks is by exercising. Exercising keeps your muscles firm, but your skin firm too. Firm skin is healthy skin, and healthy skin stretches naturally, without causing stretch marks.

Exercises:

10 - Sit Ups

Sit on the floor and with your legs straight in front, bend your knees and bring your feet flat to the floor. Slowly, lay your upper body down so your back is resting on the floor. Lower legs slightly. Put your hands behind your head and raise your upper body as far as you can manage. Do 25 sit ups per day to keep the skin taut. In addition to helping the skin, your abdomen muscles will be flatter.

11 – Crunches

Crunches are similar to sit ups, but in reverse. Lay with your back on the floor. Pull your legs up so your knees and thighs are pressed against your chest. Slowly release legs down and straight out, and then bring them back up to your chest. Repeat this process 10-20 times, or as many as you can do. This exercise helps prevent stretch marks in the abdomen and hip area.

12 – Leg Lifts

Leg lifts are great for the hip, thigh and buttock area. Lie on one side and use your hand to support your head. Brace the other arm in front of you on the floor for additional support. Bend your knees slightly. Raise the top leg and hold for two seconds, then lower. Repeat this process 25 times. Then roll over and repeat for the other leg.

13 – Squats

Squats will build up your muscle tone in the thigh, hip, abdomen and buttock areas. Muscle tone in these areas will keep fat deposits from occurring, which then leads to stretch marks. Stand tall, with your feet parallel to your shoulders. Put your hands on your hips and slowly squat down, keeping your butt perpendicular to the floor. After a few of these, your thigh muscles will begin to protest. If they do too much, aim for ten a day and build up your tolerance.

14 – Push Ups

Push-ups are good for preventing stretch marks in the upper arm and breast area. Lay straight down on the floor, with your palms down on the floor. Use either your knees for balance or your feet and push up with your hands. Hold for two seconds and then lower to the floor again. If you need to build up strength in your upper body, start with ten a day and increase to 25.

15 – Walking

Walking is great for your entire body. It keeps your legs, arms and cardiovascular system in good working order. Walking also keeps the muscles and skin in your lower body firm and stretch mark free. Walking doesn't have to be at a fast pace, just regular speed and for 20 to 30 minutes, three or four times a week.

16 - Jogging

Jogging is for the more trained athletes. Jogging will work the muscles in the hips, legs and thighs a little faster. Jogging tones the skin and helps keep stretch marks away from the high prone areas. If you aren't used to jogging but would like to start, begin slowly. Walk at a brisk pace for several weeks to build up strength and tolerance. Then try jogging for short periods of time and extend out to longer periods of time when you are comfortable.

Outside Help

When exercise and creams don't erase the stretch marks to your satisfaction, medical intervention is possible.

17 – Surgery

There are many forms of cosmetic surgery available to erase your stretch marks. Find a certified plastic surgeon in the area and have several consultations until you feel comfortable to make a decision to have the surgery. They will explain the procedures open to you, the risks, the side effects and whatever other questions you may have. Surgery to remove stretch marks can be skin removal, liposuction and lifts. The costs vary from person to person and doctor to doctor. Your insurance company probably won't cover the expense either, so check with them too.

18 - Laser Surgery

There is a new laser surgery, which claims to be painless with great results. The laser is guided over the skin and sends waves deep into the skin, triggering the chemicals that build collagen. The collagen growth is jump started, and the stretch marks are supposed to disappear after repeated visits and laser treatments. The cost is very expensive as this is a new procedure and not widely practiced yet.

There are many steps you can take in your daily life to avoid the possibility of getting stretch marks.

19 - Keep Hydrated

Drinking lots of water and fluids keeps not only your body healthy, but your skin too. Water keeps your skin firm and the collagen strong and healthy. When the collagen is strong, the skin will pull naturally and easily, with no stretch marks popping up. Water also flushes the toxins out of your body. When the toxins are removed from your body from constantly being flushed, they are also pushed out of your skin.

20 – Keep Skin Healthy

Clean skin is healthy skin. At least once daily, clean your face. This is especially important before bedtime if you wear makeup. Removing the makeup opens up the pores and allows the skin to breathe. Skin needs air to keep growing and creating new cells. The new cells keep your skin soft, smooth and wrinkle and stretch mark free.

21 - Avoid Steroids

Steroids have many dangers to a body. One of the ingredients in certain steroids actually reacts with the skin and can cause your body to form stretch marks. The stretch marks can occur anywhere – the legs, arms, abdomen and buttocks. Steroids given for treating medical conditions are not the suspects, but steroids used for body building and weightlifting are. These types of stretch marks mainly occur in men.

22 - Quit Smoking

Smoking daily is harmful for many reasons. The smoke and products you exhale with the smoke damages the elastin of the skin. Day after day, with repeated exposure only damages the elastin more. Wrinkles and stretch marks can appear on the face, but also the neck, arms, legs and entire body of a smoker.

23 - Avoid Rapid Weight Gain During Pregnancy

This may seem an impossible task if you are pregnant, but it is not. You still need to gain weight, but at a steady and consistent rate which allows your body to adjust. If you gain one pound a week for a month, but then jump up twelve pounds in the next week, your skin has to grow much faster than it is used to. It probably cannot accommodate the growth safely that quickly and will result in stretch marks.

24 – Hypnosis

Another new trend in fighting stretch marks is by using hypnosis. Trained doctors in the weight loss field believe that hypnosis can also control your body's response to something. For instance, they have a session where they tell you your body is healthy, your skin is healthy, you look great, and you have no stretch marks. If your mind believes that, then your body will follow in kind. They believe the mind can alter or affect the way you look. And they manipulate the mind for your benefit.

25 - Use Sunscreen

Sunscreen is a preventative measure in the battle against stretch marks. Whenever you go outside into the sun, cover your skin well with a high SPF sunscreen. The sunscreen dries out not only the top layers of skin, but the underneath layers as well. When the lower layers of skin dry up, the collagen also dries up. When collagen dries up, the skin is easier to damage. Stretch marks can happen with little provocation.

What Causes Stretch Marks

26 – Prednisone

Prednisone is a medicine used to treat various illnesses. If it is prescribed for your health, you must take it. However, if you know that it will predispose your body to stretch marks, you can fight the battle and win with a little knowledge. Apply moisturizers regularly, take an enriched vitamin, drink plenty of water and exercise. You may do these things already, but do them routinely for the best results. If you don't need prednisone for a specific reason, avoid it.

27 - Birth Control

Certain birth control methods have a dose of hormone that also can increase your chances of getting stretch marks. The depo provera shot and Dianette set up women's skin to be prone to stretch marks. If you are taking either of these, consult your doctor to switching to a new kind with lower risks. Don't skip your birth control, just control your diet, drink water and use moisturizers until you see your physician.

28 - Get Treatment for Depression

Depression affects more than your mind. It affects your whole body. When the brain has a chemical imbalance resulting in depression, the chemical makeup in your skin changes too. The skin becomes dry, the collagen can become weak and stretch marks will appear. To keep this from happening, visit your doctor and talk to him about your options. Being on a prescription anti-depressant doesn't have to be for life. But it can help your whole body in the short term.

29 - Take Vitamins

No matter how hard we try to eat a balanced diet, it is never quite good enough. To make up for this, make it a practice to take a vitamin every day. The vitamins will help your skin from the inside out and keep the elastin and collagen healthy. And stretch mark free.

30 - Environmental Changes

It's hard to control outside influences on our lives. Those outside changes can affect our health in ways we never imagined. Say, a detour is on the next street over directing traffic to your street. The car traffic is much heavier, resulting in much more fumes and exhaust outside of your house. The fumes and exhaust can affect your system. They get in your body and wreak havoc with the normal flow of things. While you can't change this outside influence, others you can. Stay away from bars where there are heavy smokers. Avoid living near a manufacturing plant that spills lots of pollution in to the air. Avoid swimming in polluted or heavily chemical waters.

31 – Puberty

Puberty is going to happen, no matter what. Expect the changes in your body to be drastic, and then you won't be surprised if they aren't. Puberty is the result of many hormones changing and developing your body. Many of these hormones will affect the skin in the form of acne, growth spurts and stretch marks. To reduce the stretch marks, keep taking vitamins, drink water and exercise. Feeding the hormonal urges with junk food will only make the acne and skin problems worse!

32 - Rapid Weight Loss

Just as rapid weight gain can cause stretch marks, rapid weight loss can too. Drastically dropping pounds can pull the fat stored around the skin quickly. This can result in skin sags. Sags can make the skin pull and stretch, even though the weight is going down. The added pressure of sags on the skin can cause stretch marks everywhere. And when you are losing weight drastically, the vitamins and nutrients may not be at the level they should, resulting in dry and damaged skin. Try to lose your weight slowly and maintain good health.

Certain Medical Conditions also predispose a body to having stretch marks. These conditions cannot be helped, but if you have one, you know you will need to take extra measures to ensure you do not have excessive stretch marks on your body.

33 - Cushing's Syndrome

Cushing's Syndrome is a hormonal disorder that affects the entire body. This hormonal imbalance causes the skin to be thin and weak. Weak and thin skin is prone to stretch marks, which is also common in people who suffer from Cushing's disease. There isn't much to do to prevent the stretch marks, except take as good of care of your skin as possible. The doctor's will prescribe medicine to relieve any symptoms, but your skin will need moisturizers and plenty of vitamins to stay strong.

34 - Topical Corticosteroid Overuse

This medicine is a steroid placed on the outside of the skin to treat certain skin disorders. Too much use can be a bad thing. Overuse causes the collagen to break down prematurely. And by now, we know that collagen is the main thing that prevents stretch marks. To help this vicious cycle in your body, takes lots of vitamins and collagen building supplements.

35 - Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome

This hereditary disease affects the collagen in one's body. The collagen doesn't form correctly and the tissues are weak, amongst other symptoms. The collagen that is not strong under the skin results in stretch marks. Depending on how severe your case is determines your plan of treatment. Consulting a physician is the only way to combat this disease.

There are many homeopathic people who believe in homemade remedies to cure every ailment. However, they don't give up their recipes for free. Many mix them up and sell them in apothecary shops or in small specialty stores. Occasionally you can find a recipe. Try the following at your own risk. They have no proven results.

Recipes:

36 - Stretch mark Oil

Need one dark glass 50 ml bottle.

In a bowl, pour 50 ml of wheat germ oil

Add:

15 drops of essential oil of lavender

10 drops of the essential oil of neroli

Mix together and massage into the skin daily after bathing.

37 – Stretch Mark Cream

¼ c cocoa butter

1 tbsp wheat germ oil

1 tsp sesame oil

1 tsp apricot kernel oil

1 tsp vitamin E

2 tsp grated beeswax

1 tsp vanilla abstract (for smell)

Mix all the ingredients together in a 2 quart pan and leave out the vanilla. Heat the mixture until everything is melted. Stir well and remove from heat. Add in the vanilla, stir and allow to cool. When cool, store in a jar and keep airtight. Massage in to your skin daily or as needed.

Other Wives' Tales

The Old Wives' Club members had tricks and tips for everything. Here are some other ways they say will get rid of and prevent further stretch marks from appearing on your body for any reason.

38 – Topical Vitamin C

They probably have a way to make this, but most people have to go to a store and get it. It is available in beauty stores, health stores and some drug stores. Vitamin C comes in a cream or oil form and can be rubbed in to the skin in prone areas to prevent stretch marks.

39 – Green Tea

They won't spill too many secrets surrounding this anti-oxidant. The best bet is to drink green tea, rather than spread it over the body. Green tea can come in caffeinated and decaffeinated forms, as well as loose tea and bagged tea. Try it several ways before you decide how you like it best. Drink daily for best results.

40 – Soy products

Eating soy products has shown to have many positive effects on the body, not just the skin. Soy products help women through menopause, keep hormone levels in check and fight certain diseases. If you aren't sure about soy products, get a soy supplement that you can add to meals in a small way. You won't hardly notice the taste when you try it a little bit at a time. Gradually add more or cook with soy products in your every meal.

With most human bodies, stretch marks are inevitable. With proper care and preventative measures taken, you can reduce the number and severity of them. Feel confident again by following these methods to reduce your stretch marks today! Good luck.

