

PREGNANCY

Can I Use Bio-Oil While Pregnant?



One such fan-fave product is [Bio-Oil](#), an over-the-counter skin care formula designed to improve the appearance and suppleness of your skin. But among everyday users and pros alike, the jury is still split on whether or not it's safe to use while pregnant.

“As a mother of two boys, I certainly remember almost being pulled into the Bio-Oil bandwagon as I saw my ever-increasing belly bump continue to grow during pregnancy,” recalls Neda Mehr, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and medical director at [Pure Dermatology Cosmetic & Hair Center](#) in Newport Beach, Calif.

Intrigued by her use of the word “almost” and the ongoing debate, we asked Dr. Mehr and two more board-certified dermatologists to weigh in on the safety, benefits, and possible risks of using Bio-Oil while pregnant.

Is It Safe to Use Bio-Oil During Pregnancy?

Here's where the debate on using Bio-Oil while pregnant heats up. According to Bio-Oil—which originated in Europe—its skincare oil has been assessed for safety by the Regulation of the European Parliament and Council on Cosmetic Products. They determined that its chemical structure, toxicological profile, level of inclusion, and total level of daily exposure to each ingredient were safe for use, including by pregnant people. ^[5]

However, across the pond here in the U.S., the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has flagged multiple ingredients as potential risks for pregnant and breastfeeding people—no matter what amount of them are used.

“The FDA currently categorizes the safety of ingredients for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers by the letters A, B, C, D, and X,” explains Dr. Mehr. Category A and B ingredients are the only ones it considers safe to use while pregnant and breastfeeding, while on the other end of the spectrum, ingredients labeled X are deemed especially harmful to a developing baby and should be completely avoided during pregnancy. Bio-Oil falls smack in the middle of this range of caution.

“[It] has several ingredients of concern for the pregnant female, including retinyl palmitate, a form of vitamin A commonly known as retinol, Retin-A, or tretinoin, categorized as class C,” Dr. Mehr cautions. Category C effectively means that the risk to a developing baby is unknown, and therefore cannot be ruled out. As with many things in pregnancy, if the potential risks of a product outweigh the benefits, it's usually advisable to be on the safe side and avoid its use.

Hydration

Speaking of hydration, when it comes to caring for your skin during pregnancy, we cannot emphasize it enough. It's of utmost importance to keep your skin hydrated while pregnant, no matter what skincare routine you choose.

In the case of skincare oils, however, Dr. Hausauer notes, "All of the oil hydration may keep skin more supple to limit damage to the deeper part of the skin known as the dermis, which, when stretched rapidly or torn excessively, forms depressed red (striae rubra) or white (striae alba) lines, much like scars." Needless to say, both pregnancy and childbirth can cause these types of trauma to your skin.

Dr. Mehr augments that with a similar sentiment: "The skincare benefits of applying oils to the growing skin of your belly bump are that the skin cells are stretching and creating more skin cells to keep up with [your pregnant] body's demand." This may result in itching and discomfort, which hydrating oils can help soothe or may even help minimize from the get-go.

All that said, it may be best to temper your expectations with any topical product, especially when it comes to stretch marks. "While no product can fully prevent striae, because of the interplay between genetic susceptibility and how much the skin must stretch [while pregnant], keeping a rapidly expanding belly lubricated can be helpful." Much like wetting dry clay makes it more flexible, the same is true for properly hydrating your skin.

Miscarriage or Premature Labor

Another ingredient of concern in Bio-Oil is the seemingly innocuous-sounding rosemary oil. “Studies found rosemary oil to cause uterine contractions, which could technically lead to miscarriage or premature labor if used in large quantities,” Dr. Mehr cautions. “Since our skin is considered a drug delivery system (think estrogen patches or nicotine patches), putting products considered ‘unsafe’ in oral medicinal amounts on our skin can cause dangerous internal effects.” Makes sense: if you are advised against drinking it, your skin likely ought to be too.

Extra Virgin Coconut Oil

Here’s one that can provide you with several benefits that Bio-Oil offers, without all the worry. “I would recommend using extra virgin coconut oil to hydrate the skin during pregnancy,” Dr. Mehr offers. “It has potent antioxidant, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties that make it a natural option for the discerning mommy-to-be.” In fact, being antimicrobial is a benefit not even Bio-Oil boasts.