

# A fine line

Expecting stretch marks with your growing bump? Here's why they appear and how you can ease them

**E**ver heard the phrase: 'The clue's in the name'? Well, it's true for stretch marks. When your skin stretches, it can't always cope, and it breaks. Skin specialist and founder of the British Association of Cosmetic Doctors, Dr Patrick Bowler ([www.courthouseclinics.com](http://www.courthouseclinics.com)) explains: "Stretch marks are scars in the skin. When the skin stretches, so do the collagen and elastic fibres in it. Think of it like an elastic band – if you pull it far enough, it'll stretch and then snap. That's what makes the initial mark, which will be pinky and darker in colour. They eventually turn silvery and light."

## Why they love bumps

As your baby grows and your stomach expands, there's more potential for stretch marks to occur. "Some women get them on breasts and thighs, too," says Patrick. "It's a common problem, especially when breasts have been engorged for feeding."

## They're not inevitable (hoorah!)

There's no way of knowing if you'll get them, but there can be a genetic link. "Just like some people bleed or bruise more easily, some people are more prone to getting stretch marks. You might notice people who have put on a lot of weight for some reason will get them," says Patrick. For Claire Holden, 41, from Birmingham, mum to Kai, 10 weeks, it was a worry. "My mum had stretch

marks, so I wondered if I'd get them when I was expecting," she says. "I used SilDerm stretch mark prevention oil from early on, twice a day, in the hope it would help my skin, and thankfully I don't have any marks so far." SilDerm oil, £34.95 ([www.silderm.com](http://www.silderm.com))

## Keeping them at bay

"Prevention is better than cure," says Nina Couvaras, GP and age prevention and skin care specialist.\*

And diet plays a part. While what you eat can't stop the stretch marks appearing, you can make sure that by not putting on weight too quickly, they're kept at bay. "The first thing is to try not to gain too much weight in pregnancy. This also helps keep you healthy, too!" Weight gain adds to the amount your skin needs to stretch – making it more likely that you'll get marks. The more supple your skin, the less it will tear as your bump grows. "Dry skin breaks more easily when it's stretched," says Nina.

## POST BUMP TREATMENT

While you can only hope they won't happen, fear not, once you've had your little one if your stretch marks are really plaguing you, there are some non-invasive treatments available: **DERMAROLLER** Originally designed to treat acne scarring, a roller with tiny pins is brushed over the marks, to prick the skin, followed by Vitamin A cream to help the skin snap back into shape.

**RIOBLUSH** Fills skin with carbon dioxide to help boost collagen production and elastin, so the skin can repair itself.

**DEMILEC ACOUSTIC WAVE THERAPY**



Moisturise daily to help avoid stretch marks

## 3 OF THE BEST stretch mark saviours

### Green Baby Stretch Mark Cream: ★★★★★

"Organic, rich, nourishing, doesn't leave skin greasy," £8.95 for 70g ([www.greenbaby.com](http://www.greenbaby.com))



### Palmer's Cocoa Butter Formula Massage Lotion for Stretch Marks: ★★★★★

"Nice smell and great value for money," £6.99 for 200ml ([www.boots.com](http://www.boots.com)).

### Bio-Oil: ★★★★★

"Drier than many other oils, so a little easier to apply and can also be



*It happens to everyone...*

**"I like to put a lot of cream on my tummy, as long as it's natural. I think it works to reduce stretch marks and make the skin nice and soft. I alternate between Balance Me oil, Mama Mio**

