Dear Alice,

I looked through all your archives and could not find anything pertaining to my question. So I was wondering if there is any way to get rid of stretch marks or make them less noticeable? I could really use your help with this one.

?Stretched

Answer

Dear Stretched,

Stretch marks are streaks on the skin that develop when the skin thins and loses elasticity during periods of rapid growth. Stretch marks are extremely common for adolescents and pregnant women. Common places for stretch marks include breasts, hips, thighs, or anywhere else the skin is growing and stretching. Stretch marks can also occur when a person injects anabolic steroids or uses strong topical steroids for a prolonged period in a specific area of his or her body. Although no methods of preventing stretch marks are known, the good news is that they usually fade with time, losing their rippling look and becoming less noticeable.

Stretch marks develop within the connective tissue layer underneath the skin. Therefore, expensive creams and lotions that claim to remove or fade stretch marks will not work. In extreme cases of stretch marks that do not go away on their own, cosmetic surgery can reduce their appearance. For example, pregnancy-induced stretch marks can be minimized through abdominoplasty (a type of plastic surgery sometimes referred to as a “tummy tuck”). This surgery involves removal of extra, loose skin (plus the stretch marks) and tightening of the abdominal muscles.

Laser treatment can also be used to help lessen extreme cases of red and purple stretch marks. During this procedure, a vascular laser targets swollen and inflamed blood vessels. It is thought that the laser treatment helps with skin cell production and increased collagen production. However, laser treatments are usually very expensive, and results may be minimal.
Although no home remedies will completely eliminate stretch marks (except patience), there are a couple of ways to help speed up tissue recovery and minimize the look of your scars. You can try to avoid sun exposure to stretch mark scars, and also slather vitamin E lotion or cream to the affected area. In the meantime, it might be best simply to embrace your skin — whether smooth or stretched — it’s just another part of what makes you unique!

Alice!
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