Hi Alice,

Could you please let me know whether it is safe to colour hair or bleach face during pregnancy. If unsafe, is that during any particular period or throughout?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Many people give things up during pregnancy for their own health and that of their babies. Giving yourself a special treat like a new hairstyle or a favored facial treatment sounds like a deserved reward for a mom-to-be. Although there is no clear evidence that hair dye or bleach is dangerous to a developing fetus, you may want to consider these tips for minimizing exposure to potentially harmful chemicals:

- Wait until the second trimester. The first three months of pregnancy are when the developing fetus is most sensitive. Most health care providers recommend waiting until the fourth month for chemical hair or nail treatments.
- Minimize skin contact. A small amount of the bleach or hair chemicals you apply will be absorbed through your skin, especially the scalp. Leave the products on for as short a time as possible. Rinse thoroughly with water when you're done, and use gloves to protect your hands.
- For the hairdo, try highlights, painting, frosting, or foiling. These will give you a new color without exposing your scalp to the dye.
- Don't inhale! Well, do inhale, but make sure the room you're in is well ventilated so you are breathing in as little of the chemicals as possible.
- If you choose to bleach facial hair, minimize potential risk by rinsing skin with cold water beforehand (to keep pores small), work in a well ventilated area, and limit the amount of time the product stays on your skin.
- Never dye or bleach eyebrows or eyelashes, as there is a risk for infection in the eye area.
Although there are no conclusive links between hair dye, bleach, and birth defects, it's probably best to err on the side of caution. If you have particular concerns, you may want to talk with your health care provider. And, aside from whatever beauty care you choose, other special indulgences may help balance out the stress and sacrifices many new moms face. Warm baths, massages, or a skin treatment with cocoa butter or essential oils are safe and may help you feel more beautiful, too.

Alice!
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