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Just Say Spahhh: Spa DOs and DON'Ts During Pregnancy

by Ann Douglas

Ready to nurture your inner diva by treating yourself to a day at the spa? Here are the basic DOs and DON'Ts of "spa-ing" for two.

First Trimester

DO remember to spill the beans about your pregnancy the moment you call to book your day at the spa. That way, the staff will be able to help you steer clear of any treatments that aren't recommended for mothers-to-be—basically any treatment that involves high temperatures (whirlpools, saunas, steam rooms, heat wraps, etc.) or the use of any herbal or botanical products that could potentially be harmful to the developing baby.

DON'T forget to let the therapist or esthetician who is treating you know if you're battling morning sickness. Once the person administering your treatment is aware of the problem, she can take steps to ensure that the treatment room is well ventilated and she can avoid using any strongly-scented spa products that might inadvertently trigger your nausea.

Second Trimester

DO indulge yourself in a mid-pregnancy facial. Facial treatments designed to unplug oily pores can help to minimize the severity of the hormonally-driven acne breakouts that are a pregnancy rite-of-passage for many moms-to-be.

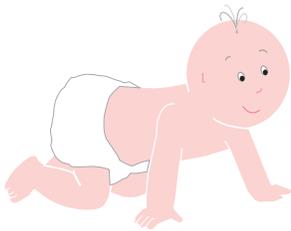
DON'T go near the tanning bed. Not only is the heat from the tanning bed potentially harmful to your developing baby, but the manmade "suntan" you acquire in the tanning bed will only serve to accentuate the butterfly-shaped area of pigmentation that can occur on the cheeks and forehead—the so-called "mask of pregnancy."

Third Trimester

DO treat those tired tootsies to an ultra-soothing foot massage and pedicure.

Trying to apply nail polish to your own toe nails is pretty much impossible at this stage of the game, so let someone else give you the ultimate pre-labor send-off: some fire engine red toenails to flash while you're giving birth. (Oh, baby!)

DON'T overlook your belly. Instead of neglecting your belly, treat it to a moisturizing body scrub. This particular spa treatment will help you to get rid of the build-up of dead skin cells that can otherwise lead to an itchy belly—a perennial source of annoyance for moms-to-be. At the same time, it will help replenish some of the moisture that's being lost as a result of hormone-induced skin dehydration.



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MOTHER MESSAGE

Don't expect your massage to remain business as usual once the pregnancy test comes back positive. Some minor modifications to your massage routine may be necessary for both comfort and safety reasons. Here's what to expect:

- **A more pregnancy-friendly massage position.** Early on in pregnancy, you'll want to avoid putting a lot of weight on those oh-so-tender breasts. Then, as your pregnancy progresses, you'll need to work around your growing belly. After the fifth month—you'll need to avoid lying flat on your back because that position can lead to extreme dizziness, even fainting. While the side-lying position is a perennial favorite with moms-to-be, it's not the only position that works. Simply toss a few wedge-shaped pillows on the massage table and see where your body takes you!
- **Less vigorous massage strokes.** Deep massage work—particularly on the legs—is a definite no-no for pregnant women. Pregnant women are highly prone to varicose veins and a vigorous leg massage could cause a blood clot in the leg to become dislodged, potentially leading to death or disability. Fortunately, massage doesn't have to be vigorous to be effective: your massage therapist's less vigorous massage strokes will still help you to do battle with leg cramps, headaches, fluid retention, swollen ankles, and other pregnancy-related aches and pains.