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No evidence for topical preparations in preventing stretch marks in pregnancy

CLINICAL QUESTION

How effective are topical preparations in preventing stretch marks in pregnancy?

BOTTOM LINE

There was no statistically significant average difference in the development of stretch marks in women who received topical preparations with active ingredients compared to women who received a placebo or no treatment. Only three trials (involving 461 women) looked at the severity of the stretch marks and these did not show a clear difference.

The preparations used included Alphastrin[®], Trofolastin[®], Verum, olive oil and cocoa butter, which all contain vitamin E; Alphastrin and Verum also contain hyaluronic acid.

CAVEAT

All trials were relatively small, with four of the six trials each including less than 100 women. The trials were also different in terms of when the women first started to use the topical applications, ranging from the first trimester to the first 20 weeks. Parity of the women participating in the included trials also differed.

CONTEXT

Stretch marks (striae gravidarum) occur in 50% to 90% of pregnant women. They appear as red or purple lines or streaks that fade slowly to leave pale lines or marks on the skin. The abdomen, breasts, and thighs are commonly affected.

They are a source of concern for some women, and can impact on their quality of life.

COCHRANE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Brennan M, Young G, Devane D. Topical preparations for preventing stretch marks in pregnancy. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2012; **(11)**: CD000066. DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD000066.pub2.

This review contains 6 studies involving 800 participants.

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