



## Hair Treatment During Pregnancy

Questions related to hair treatments during pregnancy are common. Most treatments involve chemicals and dyes which leave women wondering whether or not they are safe.



### The different types of hair treatments include:

- Coloring – this includes temporary dyes, semi-permanent dyes and permanent dyes.
- Curling – permanent waves are created by placing two solutions on the hair. The first solution is a waving solution and the second is a neutralization/fixation solution.
- Bleaching – involves the use of hydrogen peroxide
- Relaxers – are also known as hair straighteners and involve a variety of chemicals.

### Are hair treatment chemicals dangerous during pregnancy?

Manufacturers frequently change formulas and many different chemicals are used in these processes. These chemicals are not generally evaluated for effects on pregnancy, so limited data on use during pregnancy is available.

It is likely only a small amount of any hair treatment chemicals are actually absorbed into a woman's system through her skin. This minimal amount is not thought to be enough to create a problem for the baby. The fixation solution used during permanents may irritate the scalp, but not affect other areas of the body and only a minimal amount would be absorbed. The same would be true of chemicals used in the straightening process.

### Are hair dyes safe during pregnancy?

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), hair dyes are probably safe to use during pregnancy because so little dye is absorbed through the skin. However, it is still important to be cautious, therefore many health care providers recommend pregnant women not use permanent hair dyes during the first three months.

While the absorption through the skin is minimal, the concern is that breathing fumes during the process could be harmful to the developing baby. Permanent hair dyes contain ammonia which has a strong chemical fume. The recommendation is to avoid hair dyes which contain ammonia. The chemical fume warning also applies to straightening products as well.

Semi-permanent dyes or a highlighting process may be considered safer for pregnant women. With highlights, the dye is enclosed in foil and won't be absorbed into the skin. Vegetable dyes such as henna are also considered likely to be safe

for coloring hair during pregnancy.

### **What precautions should I take when chemically treating my hair?**

The following safety tips should be followed when chemically treating your hair:

- Consider waiting until the second trimester for hair dye, bleaching, permanents or straightening.
- Have the treatment completed in a well-ventilated area.
- Don't leave the chemicals on your head any longer than necessary.
- Rinse your scalp thoroughly with water after treatment.
- Wear gloves when applying chemicals.
- Carefully follow directions on the product package.
- Do a patch test for allergic reactions before completing the process
- Never dye or bleach eyebrows or eyelashes. This could cause swelling or increase risk of infection in the eye area.



### **What if I'm pregnant and a cosmetologist?**

The risks during pregnancy come from working conditions, number of hours worked and exposure to the chemicals used in treating hair. Studies show that because of improved dye formulas and better working conditions, fewer risks are associated with this type of work.

Proper working conditions are important. These include working in a well-ventilated area, wearing protective gloves and not eating or drinking in the work area. These precautions reduce the exposure to hair treatment chemicals.

### **Is it safe to have hair treatments while I breastfeed?**

It is unlikely any chemicals will enter the breast milk since so little is absorbed through the skin.

For more information, visit  
[AmericanPregnancy.org](http://AmericanPregnancy.org)