

NEW BEAUTY[®]

The Best Pregnancy-Safe Acne Ingredients and Products

How to battle breakouts while expecting.

By Isabelle Buneo, Editorial Assistant · Published: Mar 30, 2024



As we all know, the needs of our skin change drastically when pregnant. Just because you're pregnant and rocking that mom-to-be glow doesn't mean that acne will always stay away throughout the nine-month journey. In fact, some expecting individuals develop acne after becoming pregnant.

Being pregnant comes with enough challenges, and trying to figure out what products you can use to treat pregnancy acne safely shouldn't be an added struggle. While most moms-to-be know to avoid harsh products like retinol, not many know which products and ingredients are okay to use for treating acne effectively and safely. Ahead, dermatologists explain what ingredients and products to reach for to treat breakouts when pregnant, and which to avoid.

Featured Experts

- **Jody Levine, MD** is a board-certified dermatologist in New York
- Ava Shamban, MD is a board-certified dermatologist in Santa Monica, CA

Pregnancy Acne: Which Ingredients Are Safe to Use

While it is important to be cautious about using harsh ingredients on the skin while pregnant, New York dermatologist **Jody Levine, MD** explains that certain acids—specifically alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs)—can be great options for minimizing breakouts while pregnant. “Azelaic acid is a wonderful topical ingredient that is used for acne in pregnancy,” **Dr. Levine** explains. I also like topical clindamycin lotion as well as glycolic acid products.”

Reiterating the benefits of AHAs for pregnancy acne, Santa Monica, CA dermatologist Ava Shamban, MD explains that when it comes to prescription products, prescription azelaic acid is safe during pregnancy. Non-prescription alpha hydroxy acids like lactic acid, glycolic acid and mandelic acid, are also generally safe for use during pregnancy.

While AHA products can be great for treating pregnancy acne, **Dr. Levine** cautions that “the skin may be more sensitive to ingredients in general so, I like to keep the skin-care routine to a minimum and introduce new products slowly.” Using gentle actives to battle breakouts is helpful, but **Dr. Levine** also reiterates that “moisturization and sunscreen continue to be important,” so curating a routine that is hydrating, protective and gentle is key.

Treating Breakouts While Pregnant: What to Avoid

“The two common acne ingredients to avoid while treating acne during pregnancy are salicylic acids and retinoids,” **Dr. Levine** explains, “but to be safe, all products should be approved by your dermatologist before using.” In addition to avoiding retinol products, Dr. Shamban also recommends avoiding anything with retinoic acid in it, as the concentration of actives in retinoic acid is a lot higher and can cause potential irritation and harm to the fetus.

Pregnancy-Safe Acne Products

As **Dr. Levine** noted, azelaic acid and glycolic acid acne treatments come in many over-the-counter brand names. If your breakouts aren’t bad enough to warrant prescription medication, check out these tried-and-true AHA products to help treat pregnancy acne without causing irritation.

1/7

The Ordinary Azelaic Acid Suspension 10% (\$28)

With pregnancy-safe azelaic acid as its key ingredient, The Ordinary’s Azelaic Acid Suspension 10% is suitable for all skin types and addresses blemishes, uneven texture, redness and more. After cleansing and using any water-based serums, reach for this concentrated dose of antioxidant-rich azelaic acid, which has a lower irritation rate than other direct acids, making it perfect for daily use when treating sensitive yet acne-prone skin.



2/7

Paula's Choice 8% AHA Gel Exfoliant (\$37)

Utilizing a unique, gel exfoliating formula, Paula's Choice 8% AHA Gel Exfoliant is an AHA exfoliant that features glycolic acid which helps slough off dead skin cells to clarify the skin while firming and preventing wrinkles too. With an optimal pH range of 3.5–3.9, the acid concentration in this gel product is strong enough to reap skin-clearing benefits without over-stripping or causing irritation.



3/7

Versine Calm & Hydrate Serum for Acne-Prone Skin (\$80)

The proprietary, high-value combination of azelaic acid and proven acne-fighting ingredients inside this OBGYN and derm-approved, pregnancy-safe product helps to diminish acne spots and prevent post-acne marks all at once, while simultaneously improving brightness and hydration.



4/7

SkinCeuticals Glycolic 10 Renew Overnight (\$90)

Let's be honest—as an expecting parent, you may not have the time for a 10-step skin care routine or even the energy to dedicate time during the day to acne treatments, which is why SkinCeutical's Glycolic 10 Renew Overnight is a great option for treating inflamed or acne-prone skin while you sleep.



5/7

CeraVe Hydrating Facial Cleanser (\$18)

A fan-favorite amongst moms-to-be and anyone struggling with sensitive yet reactive skin, CeraVe's Hydrating Facial Cleanser is a perfect option for creating a gentle yet effective pregnancy skin-care routine, per **Dr. Levine's** advice. With essential ceramides and hyaluronic acid, this cleanser removes makeup and impurities while boosting the health of the skin's barrier and providing much-needed hydration to pregnant skin.



6/7

Tatcha The Dewy Skin Cream (\$72)

One of the most popular brands for individuals with sensitive skin, Tatcha's The Dewy Skin Cream is a must-have for maintaining hydrated, plump skin during pregnancy. While many people think strong, acidic products are priority for treating acne, as **Dr. Levine** noted, hydration is key in making sure skin stays healthy. The blend of hyaluronic acid, red algae and Japanese purple rice in this fragrance-free formula makes it a perfect fit for a pregnancy-safe skin-care routine.



7/7

La Roche-Posay Anthelios Mineral Ultra-Light Face Fluid SPF 50 (\$38)

SPF is a must regardless of what your skin concerns are, but the oil-free formula in this mineral sunscreen makes it a great option for protecting the skin if excess oil and breakouts seem to be more of an issue during pregnancy. Allergy-tested and dermatologist-approved for safety, this noncomedogenic SPF is formulated without fragrance, parabens, oxybenzone, octinoxate and chemical sunscreen filters, making it a great option for pregnant buyers.

