

Pregnancy is Prettier and 'Healthier' Without the Tan: Expert

June 4 2010



(PhysOrg.com) -- Even though it's understood that ultraviolet light cannot penetrate the body to reach the womb, or the fetus, there are other factors directly related to tanning that can put both the mother and fetus at risk.

Is it safe to sunbathe or tan when pregnant?

This mother-to-be question is perhaps not the first to come to mind but it's logical to ask nonetheless, especially for women who live in hot geographical locations or become pregnant during the summer months.

"Nine months is such a small amount of time to make vanity sacrifices, so I advise it's always best to stay on the safe side by avoiding sun exposure for the purpose of tanning altogether when pregnant," says

James Van Hook , MD, professor and director of maternal-fetal medicine at UC Health.

Even though it's understood that ultraviolet light cannot penetrate the body to reach the womb, or the fetus, there are other factors directly related to tanning that can put both the mother and fetus at risk, he says.

For example, during [pregnancy](#), especially in the first trimester, hormonal changes occur that alter normal pigmentation and can make the skin more susceptible to burn or rash. Even without tanning, some pregnant women experience something commonly known as "the mask of pregnancy" or chloasma, which appears as irregular brown patches on the face.

One of the biggest concerns regarding tanning and pregnancy, Van Hook says, lies with the possibility of dehydration or overheating (hyperthermia). In the initial stages of pregnancy, there are certain studies that have linked extreme hyperthermia to birth defects including [heart problems](#), abdominal wall defects and problems with the development of the nervous system.

Both external and internal concerns for the mother and child extend to the use of tanning beds as well.

"Although dehydration issues are less likely with [indoor tanning](#), it would seem to not make sense to increase pregnancy risk through exposure via behaviors such as the use of a [tanning bed](#)," Van Hook says.

Regardless of whether you are pregnant or not, exposure to the sun puts you at risk for premature aging and malignant melanoma (skin cancer), so it's always best to follow the sun protection guidelines provided by the [American Cancer Society](#) and hydrate often.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: Pregnancy is Prettier and 'Healthier' Without the Tan: Expert (2010, June 4) retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-06-pregnancy-prettier-healthier-tan-expert.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.