



## HAIR TREATMENTS & PREGNANCY

The information below will help you determine if the use of hair treatments during pregnancy represents and increased fetal risk. With every pregnancy, all women have a 3 to 5 percent chance of having a baby with a birth defect.

### *What are the different types of hair treatments?*

Hair treatments include hair coloring, hair curling (permanents), hair bleaching, and hair straightening agents (relaxers). Hair coloring procedures are divided into several groups determined by the length of time the color stays in the hair. These categories include temporary dyes, semi-permanent dyes, and permanent dyes. Permanent dyes have received the most attention, and they include a variety of chemicals. Hair curling or permanent waves are produced by placing two solutions in the hair. The first solution is waving fluid and the second is a fixation or neutralization solution. Hair bleaching involves the use of hydrogen peroxide, and hair straighteners or hair relaxers involve a variety of chemicals.

The amount of exposure, the timing during the pregnancy, and frequency of use may be important factors when thinking about hair treatments in pregnancy. Since many different chemicals are used and manufacturers frequently change formulations, these general guidelines are offered based upon small doses, animal data, and limited data in pregnant women. Cosmetic products are frequently used, but are not generally evaluated for effects on pregnancy.

### *Do I absorb hair coloring/dye through my skin?*

Low levels of hair dye can be absorbed through the skin after application, and the dye is excreted into the urine. This minimal amount is not thought to be enough to cause a problem for the baby. **(However we recommend that you do not use any hair dye in the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester of pregnancy.)**

### *Before I was pregnant, I had my hair dyed every couple of months. Is this safe now that I am pregnant?*

There are very few studies of hair dye use during human pregnancy. In animal studies, at doses 100 times higher than what would normally be used in human application, no significant changes were seen in fetal development. We know that only a small amount of any product applied to your scalp is actually absorbed into your system, and therefore little would be able to get to the developing baby. In addition, many women have dyed their hair during pregnancy with no known reports of negative outcomes. This information, in combination with minimal absorption through the skin, makes hair treatment in pregnancy unlikely to be of concern.

### *I would like to have my hair permed and am currently in the first trimester of pregnancy. Is there any risk for birth defects or miscarriage?*

Similar to hair dyes, there is limited information available for the safety of hair permanents in pregnancy. The fixation solution used during the application of the permanent may irritate the scalp, but this has not been associated with any other effects in the body. Very little absorption is likely to occur.

**(But we would suggest that you not do this in the first trimester.)**

### *I have my hair straightened every two months. Can I continue this into pregnancy?*

A study in humans examined the use of hair straighteners during pregnancy. The use of these products was not found to increase the chance of low birth weight or preterm delivery. The study did not address the chance of other abnormal outcomes (such as birth defects). Again, it is likely that only a small amount of hair straightening products are actually absorbed into your system, so the developing baby would only be exposed to small amounts.