

6 WAYS TO MINIMIZE THE APPEARANCE OF STRETCH MARKS

Self-conscious about stretch marks or scars? Find natural ways to keep their appearance to a minimum.

[Supermodels](#) have them. So do [A-list actresses](#), your family members, and your friends—and chances are you do, too. We're talking [stretch marks](#), which occur in up to 80% of the population. And even though they're supercommon, there still isn't an easy way to get rid of them. The same thing goes for scars, which tend to stay with you for life. Here's what you can do to minimize marks and feel better when you [bare it all](#).

Stretch marks are actually a type of scar. "Stretch marks, or striae, are the thin streaks or lines that develop on the skin's surface when the skin is stretched beyond its elastic capacity," explains Paul Jarrod Frank, M.D., a cosmetic dermatologist and the founder of [PFrankMD](#). "When a part of the body grows in a short amount of time, the fibers in the middle layer of skin, or the dermis, can break and cause small tears in the tissue. These tears can reveal blood vessels in the deeper skin layers, resulting in pink, red, or purple lines on the skin's surface. Eventually, as the blood vessels contract, the discoloration will fade and the streaks may look similar to a scar."

Though our skin is amazingly resilient, a rapid body change—such as during puberty, pregnancy, major weight gain, or a growth spurt—can literally leave its mark. Stretch marks can appear anywhere on the body, but they're most likely to crop up in places with larger fat deposits, including the abdomen, butt, breasts, and thighs. They're more common among women.

MINIMIZE THE MARKS

While you can't control your genes, you can take steps to reduce the appearance of stretch marks and scars.

5. Take Action Quickly

The longer you have a mark, the harder it is to treat—ideally, treat it when the scar is still red or pink. "This is the inflammatory stage, when marks heal fastest," Frank says. "When they turn white, they are much harder to treat to see a good result."

6. See Your Doc

When topical treatments fail, the next option is to turn to a pro, but keep in mind that most treatments can set you back hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars. For a more aggressive approach, Frank has three go-to procedures. There's the VBeam Laser, which addresses skin redness and texture when stretch marks are relatively new; Fraxel Restore, a resurfacing laser that targets older, white scars; and Infini Microneedling with Fraxel that combines radio frequency and microneedling to precise depths in the skin to stimulate collagen production exactly where it is needed.