

all about stretch marks

fact: stretch marks are super common!

Studies estimate that up to 90 percent of pregnant women, 70 percent of adolescent girls, and 40 percent of adolescent males will develop the marks.

So ubiquitous are stretch marks to the human experience that **you're more likely to run into someone who has them than you are to encounter a coffee drinker** 2

causes of stretch marks

- rapid growth OR rapid weight loss (!)
- mast cells (histamine, or allergic, reaction)
- meds such as steroids, chemotherapy, prolonged antibiotics, contraceptives & neuroleptics
- congenital conditions such as Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), anorexia nervosa, chronic liver disease 1

and WHYYY do we care??

People have been trying to prevent and erase stretch marks for literally thousands of years but WHY? 2

Jameela Jamil, who has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome whch, in part, can cause stretch marks, has spoken out about them, and asked some really good questions that we should all consider:

"Why do we feel bad about ourselves? Who did that? who profits off it? do boys have to live up to the same standards? Are they shamed *as* easily & frequently as us femmes? Isn't there something a BIT off about making people's happiness & confidence lie in doll-like perfection?" 3

kinds of stretch marks

striae atrophicans (thinned skin)
striae gravidarum (following pregnancy)
striae distensae (stretched skin)
striae rubrae (red)
 striae albae (white)
striae nigra (black)
striae caerulea (dark blue) 1

okay but what ARE they?

Histopathology of striae rubrae reveals excessive fine elastic fibers in the papillary dermis with thicker 1
tortuous fibers in the periphery, with perivascular lymphocytes, dilated dermal vessels and edema. There are reduction and reorganization of elastin and fibrillin fibers, and structural changes in collagen fibers, which are thicker and densely packed in parallel rows. Histopathology of striae albae shows epidermal atrophy, loss of rete ridges, less vascularity, and densely packed, thin and scar-like horizontal collagen bundles.

so then... do creams work??

"All of those creams are moisturizers. A stretch mark is not caused by dry skin. Will it make your skin look a little more hydrated? If it looks hydrated, will it look smoother? Yes. Is it going to affect the pathophysiology of the stretch mark? No." 2
-Dr. Brooke Jackson, dermatologist

in other words: they change the actual structure of the skin!

not so much

Works Cited

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