



FIX YOUR  
**MOMMY  
BODY  
FLAWS**

**WAR VETERANS AND ATHLETES MAY BRAG ABOUT THEIR BATTLE SCARS, BUT IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST MOMS, YOU'D PROBABLY PREFER YOUR KIDS TO BE THE ONLY PHYSICAL EVIDENCE THAT YOU WERE EVER PREGNANT. THOUGH THE HEARTBURN AND EXTRA POUNDS (WELL, MOST OF THEM) EVENTUALLY FADE AWAY, YOU'RE OFTEN STUCK WITH A FEW LASTING REMINDERS OF YOUR NINE MONTHS. HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO LOOK LIKE YOUR OLD SELF AGAIN-AND WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T BOTHER TRYING.**

By MICHELE BENDER



Small are those little strings on bananas that we carefully peel off because they can taste bitter.

We've learned how to make really good baby food because that's all we do. Visit us at [www.beechnut.com](http://www.beechnut.com) or call 1-800-BEECH-NUT for more of the small details that make our meals better.

**BeechNut**  
Small is big here.

extract may also reduce discoloration. But no matter how you wipe out your spots, you must use sunscreen vigilantly to maintain results.

**What doesn't:** Over-the-counter lightening or fade creams that don't contain the above ingredients. Most will only superficially lighten the skin. **Quickest** fix: Cover up. Work with two concealers, suggests makeup artist Trish McEvoy, author of *The Power of Makeup*. Use one a shade lighter than the melasma and another that matches your natural skin tone. With your fingertips or a sponge, dab the lighter concealer into the brown patch with a patting motion. Then, apply the skin-matching concealer around it and blend. Set with translucent powder. Other tricks: If the melasma is around your mouth, downplay lips with nude liners and natural gloss. And divert attention to your eyes with eye-opening colors, a lash curler, and volumizing mascara.

## **AB FLAB**

Even if you've dropped most of your baby weight and you religiously do stomach crunches, that bulge around your belly doesn't seem to budge. That's because it's mostly stretched-out skin and muscle, says Lisa Masterson, M.D., an ob-gyn at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, in Los Angeles. **What works:** Moves that target the transverse muscles—those that wrap around the abdominals horizontally. (Regular crunches focus on lengthwise muscles.) Try the slide: On a slippery floor, like wood or linoleum, get into a push-up position, balancing on your forearms. Place a folded towel under your toes, and as you pull your abs in, slide your knees toward your chest. Do two sets of five to eight reps, three times a week; work up to three sets. "Regular cardiovascular exercise will also help reduce overall body fat," Barroll says. **What doesn't:** Electronic abdominal exercise belts. You've seen them on infomercials, but they're ineffective and painful, says a study by the American Council on Exercise. And the Federal Trade Commission has charged one of the top-selling brands with making false claims. **Quickest** fix: Body-shaping underwear. Not your grandma's corset—the latest tummy-toning undergarments are made of breathable, nonbinding fabric and are comfy enough to wear every day. Our favorites: Barely There Seamless Brief (\$10), Maidenform's Flexees Underwonder Bare-Control Brief (\$23), and Spanx Pantyhose Power Panties (\$25).

## **STRETCH MARKS**

These thin scars on the stomach, hips, breasts, or butt usually start out red and then lighten within a year. "Whether you get stretch marks depends a lot on genetics and how quickly you gain weight," says David J. Goldberg, M.D., director of laser research in the department of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York City. The earlier you treat them, though, the better your chance of fading them.

**What works:** Retin-A cream. It's most effective on newer, red marks, but steer clear of it if you're pregnant or nursing. "Retin-A builds up collagen, the firming fibers that were broken when skin was stretched," Dr. Jalilman explains. Side effects include temporary redness and flaky, dry skin. Microdermabrasion—a procedure in which tiny crystals are blasted against your skin to remove the top layer and stimulate collagen production—can treat older stretch marks. In addition, the FDA recently approved a new laser treatment that adds pigment

to older, lighter stretch marks so they blend into surrounding skin.

**What doesn't:** Belly balms and vitamin E creams. "They feel nice, and the moisture makes skin temporarily look plumper. But these products don't rebuild the skin's structure, so there's no major effect," Dr. Kressel explains. **Quickest fix:** Self-tanning lotion. A tan will help stretch marks blend into skin. For the smoothest application, exfoliate first, moisturize, and then apply the lotion. Or use a concealer to cover embarrassing lines.

## **VARICOSE VEINS**

As many as 40 percent of pregnant women develop dilated blood vessels near the skin's surface, most often on the calves and thighs. "Heredity, hormones, and the pressure on the veins of pregnancy pounds all play a role," Dr. Masterson says. Varicose veins may improve after childbirth, but they won't go away completely.

**What works:** Sclerotherapy. A doctor injects the affected leg veins with a solution that causes them to close, then fade or disappear within about two weeks. More than one session may be needed, and experts recommend waiting at least six months after delivery to begin. Temporary side effects include stinging at the injection site, muscle cramps, and redness or brown spots. Keep in mind that sclerotherapy typically isn't covered by insurance unless the varicose veins are causing pain. **What doesn't:** Vitamin K creams. "Varicose veins are too deep for a topical cream to reach and provide any benefit," Dr. Jaliman says. **Quickest fix:** Pants and long skirts. Or camouflage veins with waterproof makeup, like Dermablend or Era Face, or with self-tanning lotion. "The veins will appear less blue against tanned skin," McEvoy says.

## **5 CHANGES YOU WON'T MISS**

Thankfully, some pregnancy and postbaby side effects are only temporary.

**ACNE:** Breakouts often subside when hormone levels go back to normal. See a dermatologist, though, if acne persists for several months after childbirth.

**HEMORRHOIDS:** During pregnancy, pressure from the uterus, constipation, and hormones often cause rectal veins to swell; some women develop hemorrhoids from pushing during labor. They go *away* on their own, but medicated creams, witch-hazel pads, and sitz baths will ease pain and itching.

**CRAZY HAIR:** Your locks were thicker than ever during your nine months because pregnancy hormones halt hair shedding. After delivery, your hair goes back to its usual state (it's normal to lose about 100 strands a day). All that extra hair typically falls out in about three to six months.

**LINEA NIGRA:** It can take about a year for this dark line on your belly to fade. It's the result of hormones that deepen skin pigmentation.

**WEAK BLADDER:** The added pressure that your baby, pregnancy weight, and labor put on your bladder can weaken its muscle tone. This should subside within six months; at that point, if you're still making frequent trips to the bathroom, see your doctor.



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