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# LOOKING GOOD

MAINTAINING YOUR GLOWING LOOKS AFTER PREGNANCY HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER. DR PATRICIA YUEN TELLS SUNUJA NAIDU HOW SHE DOES IT

**D**r Patricia Yuen exudes an easy elegance in a grey dress with an asymmetrical hem. The slim and toned mother of two year old Quentin is a dermatologist and also a partner with the Marmalade Group of restaurants. Dr Yuen makes looking good appear effortless yet she is not averse to admitting that she gets the help she needs from the beauty technologies on the market.

"My present to myself after breastfeeding was Botox®. I couldn't wait because it had been a year since I had it," she says. "After giving birth, I was very tired and started developing deep lines around the mouth. Botox® is a quick pick me up and suitable for busy mums. It sets in within seven days and is good for instant gratification. There's hardly any downtime, you can put on make-up after the treatment and go."

"Many pregnant women come in for Botox® after delivery," reveals Dr Yuen. Botox® is not done on women during pregnancy and when they are lactating. Dr Yuen started using Botox® 10 years ago to prevent a deepening of frown lines between her eyebrows. "If you keep frowning you're going to get two lines there which is why I started doing it and now I don't have frown lines anymore. I believe in starting early to prevent wrinkles from forming. Wrinkles accumulate over time. If you're starting to get lines, it's good to do it when you are in your 30s than wait 10 years when the lines are deeper. Botox® and fillers are fast – they erase wrinkles and help with deep lines."

Botox® is generally used for crows' feet, frown and forehead lines and also for eyebrow lifts. When you start, you need to do it



Dr Yuen with Quentin

"She started using Botox® 10 years ago and now has a smoother, almond-shaped, more feminine jaw."

every four to six months but after that, you can stretch it to nine months, so there's a long-term benefit to using Botox®. "You'll need less and less units and the interval will get longer."

There are two types of wrinkles: dynamic wrinkles are formed through actions like frowning or smiling. Botox® relaxes the muscles that cause wrinkles. If you leave those wrinkles long enough, the dynamic wrinkles will become static and then nothing can be done about it. Botox® does not help with static wrinkles, it is mainly good for prevention.

### POST-NATAL TREATMENTS

Dr Yuen has also used Botox® to contour her jaw line. "People who have a square jaw or who clench their jaw a lot which gives rise to a square jaw can use Botox® to contour and give the jaw line a softer and more feminine look." She started 10 years ago and now has a much smoother, almond-shaped, more feminine jaw. "I've maintained it until now. That's what I mean, you start early and it'll get better."

She believes strongly in following a good skincare regimen. She has her own skincare line called Skinsense with products for different skin types. "It's safe and natural. What's important is to use a suitable cleanser, a skin smoother (a lactic acid exfoliant), a Vitamin C serum and a moisturiser." Vitamin C is a key component of the range – "It is the most researched antioxidant in terms of safety profile. It is used for brightening and evening out blotchy, uneven skintones."

A believer in the efficacy of vitamin C, she says she has become more stringent about using it. Ever since having her baby, she slathers it on her neck, saying, "Sometimes, the lines catch up." She feels that after her baby, she needs more help. "Before the baby I was invincible. Now I need more treatments as my skin looks tired. Pregnancy takes a toll on your body." Wrinkles are an inevitable result of aging but antioxidants and other measures help to prevent it.

While wrinkles and deep lines are a major concern with most women, melasma is the No.1 hormonal problem women encounter after pregnancy. Melasma is skin pigmentation due to hormonal fluctuations and darker skin types are more likely to get it. Asians, therefore, are more susceptible to it compared to their Western counterparts.

There are specially formulated creams to lighten the pigmentation although if you want to treat it more thoroughly, it is possible to do SR, an IPL radio frequency treatment that helps to pick up the melasma, then do a pigmentation booster peel, a type of chemical peel that helps to lighten it. Adult onset acne is another hormone-related problem.

A treatment for acne is microdermabrasion, which exfoliates and sucks out dead skin cells. "During pregnancy, the skin changes and sometimes the exfoliation process is not as adequate." For more recalcitrant cases, an acne booster peel – a type of chemical peel – is used with acne medication.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Some people have Botox® done in their underarms to treat hyperhidrosis (heavy sweating).

### PROTECT YOUR SKIN

Dr Yuen advises using a good sunblock with UVA and UVB protection as part of one's skincare regimen. "Many mums take their toddlers for swimming and to the playground where you have a lot of sun exposure. Be sensible, limit your time outdoors and stay out of the sun from 10am to 3pm."

Stretchmarks and cellulite are other common problems associated with pregnancy. These are genetic and there's not much that can be done about it, says Dr Yuen. "When you're thinking of getting pregnant, slap on Vitamin-C based emollients (heavy creams) to strengthen your collagen. Stretchmarks are caused by breakage of the skin and there's not much that can be done except to prevent it." Cellulite again is genetic and can afflict even women who are slim and exercise regularly.

Post-natal hair loss or telogen effluvium is a temporary problem that can afflict some women. "Pregnancy is a huge stress to the body and hair responds by falling out. However, women can be assured that the hair will grow back."

During pregnancy your skin has been stretched and it may take time for skin on the body to bounce back after the baby. Some women may find their skin doesn't get back to normal. Refirme Skin Tightening helps to firm the skin as does Body by Thermage. "Some women have a slight swelling on the lower abdomen and this is good for tightening the abdomen."

Non-invasive beauty treatments are widely available today and new treatments are constantly being invented. That said, maintaining a youthful, glowing complexion boils down to a sensible skincare regimen and good lifestyle habits like not drinking too much alcohol, eating more fruits and vegetables and less fatty food and not smoking. The latter, especially, is detrimental to the body and skin's health. And, of course, protect your skin by using a very good sunblock.