

## What causes Stretch Marks

Stretch marks are often caused as a result of pregnancy as the body is expanding fairly quickly to accommodate the growing baby and they appear mainly on the abdomen and breasts. It is thought that hormones play a part in the appearance of stretch marks and expectant mothers are advised to massage creams and oils into the skin to improve suppleness. They may also appear after rapid growth spurts; this can happen during the teenage years or at any time as a result of fluctuating weight gain and loss.

The skin stretches and the collagen and elastin in the dermis (the middle layer of the skin) becomes much thinner and breaks. At first the marks on the skin are quite red as the blood vessels can be seen. These blood vessels in time contract and the silvery white stretch marks that remain are fatty tissue.

They can fade but never disappear completely. A lack of zinc contributes to this problem, it is a mineral that is essential in the production of collagen which helps to make the skin more elastic and strong.

It is important therefore to eat foods rich in zinc; shellfish, meat, nuts, cheese, eggs and wheatgerm.