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PREGNANCY

Safe—or Not?

An expert weighs in on what's OK—and what's not—during pregnancy

YOU KNOW THAT HAVING A BABY WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE, BUT HOW MUCH DO you need to change during those nine months before delivery? The answer isn't always straightforward, and it can be hard to tell what's a smart move and what's overkill. **Zev Williams, MD, PhD**, chief of the Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University Medical Center, addresses a few key issues.

Q Can I travel by plane?

WILLIAMS Absolutely, as long as you're not too close to your due date. Many airlines have rules about when, exactly, pregnant women are no longer allowed to fly. It's not because it's dangerous, but you don't want to go into labor over the Pacific.

If you do opt to travel at any point during your pregnancy, you should know that sitting still for a long time—whether it's on a plane or in a car—can raise your risk

of dangerous blood clots, and pregnancy alone also ups this risk. Protect yourself by walking the aisles or pulling over at a rest stop so you can move around every hour or two.

Q Can I exercise while pregnant?

WILLIAMS Yes, and you should, because it's good for you and the baby. That said, stick with moderate activity. This is not the time to be training for a marathon, unless you are accustomed to strenuous activity. Get the OK from your doctor first.

Q Do I have to give up coffee?

WILLIAMS Go ahead and enjoy a cup. Some women get pregnant and decide to go cold turkey on caffeine, which can cause terrible rebound headaches. There's no evidence whatsoever that one or two cups a day is harmful.

Q Should I change my beauty routine?

WILLIAMS That really depends on what it currently involves. Most makeup, cleansers, shampoo, and deodorants are still fine to continue using during pregnancy, but if you get chemical hair treatments (like relaxers), then it's best to take a break until after you deliver. No one has carefully studied all these chemicals during pregnancy, but they have the potential to be quite potent. I'd err on the side of caution.

If you currently use acne or anti-aging products, check with your doctor. Retinol, even in the topical form, is one common ingredient you should avoid during pregnancy. This and other ingredients may cause development problems in an unborn baby.

4 Tips

MORE PREGNANCY DOS AND DON'TS TO KNOW ABOUT FROM **ZEV WILLIAMS, MD, PhD.**

STRESS AND MISCARRIAGE

Stress doesn't increase the chance of having a miscarriage. While it's still a good idea to get stress in check, no evidence shows that being frazzled will cause you to lose a baby.

WARM, NOT HOT

You can take a warm bath, but stay out of scalding hot tubs. You don't want your core body temp to get too high, which may harm an unborn baby's development.

STEER CLEAR OF ALCOHOL

You may think a drink now and again may be fine. But abstaining is best. "There's no safe limit," says Williams.

GO EASY ON EMPTY CALORIES

Limit added sugars and fatty foods to avoid gaining too much weight during your pregnancy.