



## **Guidelines for hennaing Pregnant Women (and for hennaing while pregnant!)**

**By Catharine Hinton (May 2006).**

During pregnancy, women can continue to use Henna (as long as they have no other contraindications or previous problems with henna), but there are a number of things that you should be aware of.

There is decreased oxygen available during pregnancy and you will need to modify how you treat your pregnant women in order to ensure the maximum amount of comfort and safety for the woman. Body changes from pregnancy persist 4-6 weeks postpartum, so you should continue to use these guidelines if you henna a woman during this period.

These guidelines are also suitable for pregnant women who apply henna!

Please read through the following guidelines and enjoy a happy, healthy and safe pregnancy!

**Check with your doctor or midwife before getting Henna** If you've always had henna, you can probably continue to use henna while you're pregnant, provided your pregnancy isn't considered high risk. Check with your doctor or midwife to make sure that henna is safe for you. If you have not had henna before and it doesn't seem suitable, ask your henna artist for alternatives such as gilding and glitter work. It is important to know that henna **does not** interfere with pulse oximetry readings so it is OK for hospital staff to place the fingerclamp on hennaed fingernails (however, wearing nail varnish, glitter and gilding may affect the reading and you will probably be asked to remove it).

## **Contraindications**

Do not use henna if you suffer or have suffered from any of the following conditions. Do not use henna if you already have children who suffer or who have suffered from the following conditions:

- ◆ G6DP Deficiency (Glucose-6 Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency)
- ◆ Hyperbilirubinemia
- ◆ Anaemia
- ◆ Any Chronic or acute condition which affects the your blood system.
- ◆ Any Chronic or acute condition which affects your immune system

**Be careful** Because your joints are looser than normal avoid doing anything (either receiving or applying henna when pregnant) which could make you overstretch, slip or fall or increase the risk of injury to your abdomen. You also have to take care of your knees as you will be carrying more weight than normal through your pregnancy.

**Take it easy when it's hot and humid** Pregnant or not, take it easy when the sun is blazing hot and the air is humid. Weather like this makes you prone to overheating, which may harm your baby. Although there's no proof of a danger to humans, some animal studies suggest that overheating can cause birth defects. According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, your temperature (taken under the arm) should be less than 101 degrees Fahrenheit after exertion. Other signs to look for include clammy hands and hot or cold flushes. Sweating isn't a reliable indicator of overheating.

- ◆ Ensure that the room where you henna is well ventilated and cool, and that the pregnant woman is comfortable.
- ◆ Do not increase the ambient temperature of the room in an attempt to improve stain as this will be uncomfortable for your pregnant client.
- ◆ If you use a sealant ensure that it will be comfortable for your pregnant client and will be easy for her to remove. Do not use anything which is overly sticky as this will irritate already sensitive and stretched skin.
- ◆ If you cover the design (e.g. with cotton wool) make sure that the covering is breathable and will not too hot.

**Avoid lying on your back after the first trimester** Besides being uncomfortable, this position can make you dizzy as it places your uterus right on top of the vena cava, a major vein, reducing blood flow to your brain and uterus (some women are comfortable in this position well into their pregnancies). Pay attention to your body's signals: If you feel uncomfortable, get dizzy or short of breath, sit up, or lie on your side. Don't let pregnant women lie on their back while you henna them. It is more practical and more comfortable for them to sit in a supported position such as on a couch or chair. In a festival situation ensure that you have seating available.

## **Get up from the floor slowly and carefully**

Rise gradually from the floor to avoid a sudden, rapid decrease in blood pressure which may result in momentary dizziness or a blackout. Continue walking after rising to assist return blood flow to the heart. Help your pregnant client get up from whichever position they have chosen.

**Wear loose-fitting, breathable clothing** Layer on clothes so they're easy to shed or wear outfits specially designed for pregnancy to avoid overheating. Make sure your maternity bra offers enough support and consider other maternity support clothing to keep you comfortable.

**Drink lots of water before, during, and after exertion** You can get dehydrated if you don't drink plenty of fluids, which can raise your body temperature to levels that are dangerous for you and the baby. The American College of Sports Medicine suggests drinking about two glasses of water two hours before you begin exertion and drinking 5 to 12 ounces every 15 to 20 minutes during exertion. Ensure that you have cool water available for your pregnant client to sip if she needs to.

**Avoid over-stretching** During pregnancy, all the connective tissue in the body becomes more relaxed than normal. To help prevent injury, avoid deep flexion and extension of the joints and avoid activities that require jumping or jarring motions or rapid changes in direction. If an activity becomes uncomfortable due to joint instability, modify or discontinue the activity.

**Pelvic Floor exercises**

Receiving henna is a perfect opportunity to practice your pelvic floor exercises that your midwife will have told you about! No-one need know...!

**Keep moving** Standing motionless for even short periods can decrease blood flow to the uterus and cause blood to pool in your legs, making you dizzy. Keep moving by switching positions or walking on the spot.

**STOP** Hennaing and consult your GP or Midwife if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- ◆ Bleeding or unexpected discharge
- ◆ Cramping
- ◆ Faintness
- ◆ Elevated blood pressure
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Severe joint pain

**Bibliography**

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