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beauty

[DOES IT WORK?]

sayonara, stretch marks

New research shows that you *can* make them fade.

STRETCH MARKS are an inevitable part of life—and legs and stomach—for most women. But a new procedure looks promising: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the Xtrac excimer laser to treat these annoying scars. “Currently used for psoriasis and other skin conditions, this laser stimulates cells in the area to produce more pigment, which makes stretch marks less visible,” 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 effect is like a tan, making the blemishes blend into surrounding skin (they don’t disappear completely, though). Stretch marks are remarkably common: About 90 percent of pregnant women develop them, but they can also result from weight gain, growth spurts, genetics, or long-term use of certain prescriptions, such as cortisone creams. The marks start as raised red lines, then flatten and fade to white streaks in about a year. In the past, doctors were able to remedy stretch marks at their earliest stages, but once they turned white, nothing seemed to work—that’s where the laser comes in. Results last up to six months, but they come at a cost: Most women need at least 10 weekly sessions at about \$250 to \$750 each (depending on where you live and the size of the area being treated).

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