

No More Baby Mama Drama

Stress Reduction for Two

by Judi Burton

Health providers warn expecting moms of all the ways they need to change their lifestyle and habits to support the health of the soon-to-be-born child. No alcoholic beverages; no smoking; no artificial sweeteners; don't fly; stay active, but not too active; be careful with certain medications; and on and on. It's enough to make anyone go berserk with worry. The mother is often showered with war stories and advice from veteran moms, while the soon-to-be dad can be very annoying with his tendency to treat her like a fragile flower. If you are an expecting mom, the following is probably true for you: Your back is killing you, your ankles are becoming "cankles," and you've quit all your vices for the sake of the precious bundle you are carrying. You do it without complaint because of the strong woman you are and because of how powerfully protective you feel toward that child. But, boy, could you sure use a little bit of pampering. The problem is that so many items found in salons and spas are created more for beauty than health, and, as such, may potentially endanger your baby and perhaps you, too. Remember the fumes of nail polish and hair treatment products that greeted you in so many salons and spas before, making you queasy, and then consider those possible health effects on the baby. But never fear, oh beautiful Goddess, you can have your healthy child and a safe manicure, too.

Expecting Well Maternity Spa & Wellness Center, owned and operated by Dr. Rachel Hall, is a pampering oasis for the tired and bedraggled woman, including those with child. The mission of this special spa is to offer such services as facials, manis, pedis, massages, body wraps and yoga classes to a pregnant, or soon-to-be-pregnant woman in a safe and doctor-supervised facility. I stopped in to have a chat with the doctor, who insisted on being called Rachel, for a one on one about stress reduction for mommies. "Stress reduction is the most important part of balance and wellness," she explained. "Taking the time



out to make yourself feel pretty by getting a facial or putting nontoxic polish on your toes can help reduce anxiety and get you closer to the state of wellness you are trying to achieve."

Mamma Mia Manicures

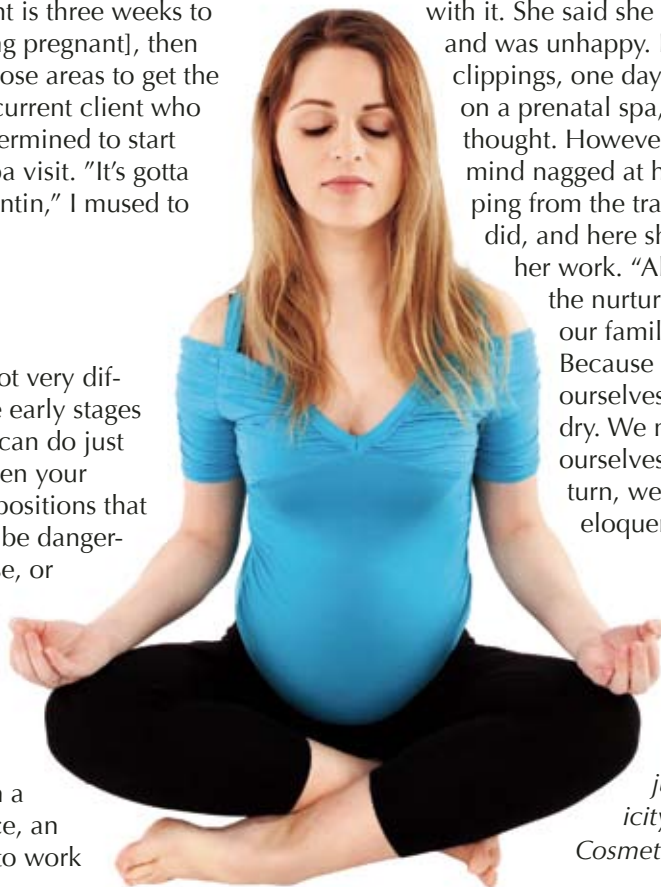
Rachel carries a line of nail polish that is safe for pregnant women. In fact, it was invented by a pregnant woman who wanted to paint her nails, but couldn't because of the toxicity levels in common nail polishes. Rachel directed me to the Environmental Working Group (EWG) website (EWG.org), where there is a very long list of cosmetics and other products rated according to hazard levels; 1 being the lowest and 10 being the most hazardous. I checked out the website later and found that according to EWG, Sally Hansen and Maybelline have the highest toxicity levels for nail products. The website rated other items, such as baby, hair, oral and skin products.

Massage Me Mommy

Rachel also spoke about massage techniques, and how a masseuse might accidentally endanger a pregnancy by working on certain pressure points. "We are very careful to stay away from these areas so as not to affect the mother's natural progression," she said, as I looked at her incredulously. The thought that a simple massage could interrupt a pregnancy astounded me and made me marvel at the human body. "Now, if the client is three weeks to term and is TOBP [tired of being pregnant], then she may want us to massage those areas to get the ball rolling." She told me of a current client who wants to do just that and is determined to start her contractions on her next spa visit. "It's gotta be better than a shot of OxyContin," I mused to myself.

Yo Yo Ma Yoga

Surprisingly, prenatal yoga is not very different from regular yoga. In the early stages of pregnancy, Rachel says you can do just about every pose, but later, when your stomach gets bigger, there are positions that just can't be done, as they can be dangerous. Specifically, the cobra pose, or any position that involves lying on your stomach or back. Expecting Well offers different classes for different stages of pregnancy. A prenatal woman might need to work on different areas of the body than a postpartum mother. For instance, an expecting woman might want to work



on hip-opening positions to prepare for labor. A postpartum mommy might want to focus on tightening her stomach area and other body parts that may have been stretched. "You can do yoga while in labor if it helps with your contractions," she said. "We also work on a lot of focused breathing." I chuckled at the thought of my future husband twiddling his thumbs impatiently as I commit to a warrior pose just after my water breaks.

Maternal Meeting of the Minds

I asked her if a lot of future children's play dates are arranged in her yoga room. She smiled brightly and said: "We really want people to use this spa as a place to meet with other women who are in the same boat. We have so many connections made here, and I am constantly referring mothers to other professionals in this field." She pointed to an array of baby pictures covering a wall. Right next to these cute little angels were business cards and flyers, all from businesses promoting their natural, green, nontoxic and healthy services. I thought how this place must seem like a lighthouse to a lot of new mothers with no experience and a mountain of questions.

Filling Your Vessel

Rachel does not have children herself, but considers her business her baby. She told me about how she worked as a medical doctor for many years and was very consumed with it. She said she felt drained at the end of the day and was unhappy. Her father, who often sent her clippings, one day sent one of a magazine article on a prenatal spa, which she threw out without a thought. However, something in the back of her mind nagged at her all that day to rescue that clipping from the trash and take another look. She did, and here she is now, enjoying her life and her work. "All women are mothers because of the nurturing gift we foster. To our friends, our families and our pets, we are givers. Because of this, we can often pour all of ourselves into others and drain our vessels dry. We need to take the time to nurture ourselves and refill our vessels, so that in turn, we can nurture others," said Rachel eloquently. I had to agree.

For more info on services provided by Expecting Well Maternity Spa & Wellness Center, visit Expectingwell.com or call 803-661-8452. The services offered are for anyone interested, and not just mothers. For more info on toxicity levels in cosmetic products, visit CosmeticsDatabase.com. See ad, page 10.