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Stretch marks are never good



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Stretch marks are not only unsightly, but women with this disorder, appear to be at increased risk for pelvic prolapse, reports an online publication from *The Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. Like stretch marks, pelvic prolapse is a connective tissue disorder. Pelvic weakness is a serious condition caused by deterioration of support structures that can result in pressure, pain, vaginal bulge and/or urinary incontinence. Pelvic prolapse is an extremely under-

reported condition and there is no official data as to how many suffer from the condition. Tracked cases in the US, however, show more than 300,000 procedures are performed annually to repair this condition.

Pregnancy has been previously associated with pelvic weakness, but in the first study to examine pelvic weakening and its association to stretch marks, researchers found that stretch marks were twice as common in women with prolapse as those without. Stretch marks occur when skin is stretched beyond its capacity and normal production of collagen is disrupted. As a result, scars or stretch marks form.

Alexa Kimball and colleagues reviewed results from a survey issued to urogynecology and dermatology patients. Participants ranged in age from 25-90 with an average weight of 152 pounds. Analysis of multiple variables identified stretch marks as the only significant predictor of pelvic prolapse.

Follow up studies will further investigate the incidence and correlation of these two connective tissue disorders and how genetic factors contribute to incidence. Research will also include prospective studies to validate findings and identify predictive markers to prevent the progression of this condition.

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