



A Day at the Spa

By Ann Brown



Moms-to-be need a little extra pampering. A day at the spa might do the trick. In fact, many spas offer treatments especially for pregnant women. But before you book your appointment, there are a few things to keep in mind. Make sure the massage therapist is certified in prenatal massage. Ask if they regularly service pregnant women. Get your doctor's okay. Visit the spa first to see if the atmosphere fits your needs. Ask friends and family to recommend a spa, especially if they have attended one while pregnant. Here are a few spas and what they offer.

In New York's Body Essentials Day Spa & Ayurvedic Center (212.465.2220; www.bodyessentials.com), they not only offer pregnancy care, but postpartum programs as well. "There is a lot of information out there about new baby care, but very little about postpartum care of the mother. We try to ensure that the mother is aware of postpartum care for herself as well as her newborn," says Dawn Burrowes, spa director at this Black-owned spa. "Our postpartum programs include diet and lifestyle counseling, and self care." They also offer massage therapy, reflexology, facials, manicures/pedicures and some body treatments, depending on the stage of pregnancy. According to Burrowes, spa visits are a major benefit for women, during pregnant and after delivery. "The pregnant client is carrying a lot of extra weight. Massage therapy and reflexology help to relax her spinal column and lower back. It also helps to improve circulation and the maintenance of flexibility," she explains.

Your skin also needs extra care during this time. "A pregnant woman's skin type may change, becoming more prone to hormonal changes, dehydration, and dry skin becomes more delicate. Circulation is impeded, cellular regeneration slows and production of elastin and collagen decreases just when the elasticity of the skin is being most challenged," says Burrowes. "To help her deal with these challenges, the therapist will be able to recommend appropriate adjustments in skin care routine, as well as tackle problems as they arise to minimize long term changes. We also ensure that the woman is following good home care procedures to minimize the possibility of stretch marks and other postpartum problems, which if they occur, are most successfully treated by early intervention."

Also in New York is The Home Spa (718.596.8668; www.homespa.com), located in Brooklyn. Owned by African-American businesswoman Debra Ann Townes, they also serve pregnant women with special massages. "Our therapists are trained in pregnancy massages," says Townes. "Massages are a great form of relaxation for pregnant women and it also helps improves circulation."

Over at Pure Skin Day Spa, another African-American-owned spa, in Baltimore, they offer natural hand and foot care (no chemicals or glue), relaxing scalp massage and massage therapy after the first trimester and post delivery. "A spa is the best place for the Mom to relax, have her needs met and receive effective therapy," says owner Jazie Leonard, who even offers a tip to combat morning sickness. "Use 1 drop of ginger (essential oil), sprinkle on a tissue and sniff at intervals."

African-American-owned Serenity Place Wellness Day Spa (760.233.5600;

www.serenityplacewellness.com), in Escondido, California, caters to many pregnant women who find their spa experience as not only relaxing but a health benefit as well. “Pregnancy is a time of major structural, physiological, psychological, spiritual, and social changes,” notes owner Kam Phillips. “A massage relieves stress on weight bearing joints (low back, hips, pelvis, and ankles); addresses areas of chronic pain and tension such as the neck and back; reduces fatigue, stress and anxiety; and increases relaxation both physically and emotionally.”

A massage can also benefit baby as well. “A massage improves overall circulation which brings more oxygen and nutrients to mother and baby,” explains Phillips, who says hand and foot care is also important during pregnancy. “It is a little more difficult to reach toes and feet. And a foot treatment is also very soothing for tired swollen feet and legs,” says Phillips.

Diva’s Day Spa (954.771.9SPA; www.divadayspa.com), an African-American spa based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, also offers special pregnancy massage. Founder Jacqueline Smith uses Diva’s Day Spa’s own skincare line. And they even have an OB/GYN, Dr. Ghea Adeboyejo, on hand to answer any questions pregnant women might have.

In Houston, women flock to African-American-owned The Root of You spa (832.778.1225; www.therootofyou.com) for manicures, pedicures, facials and massages, including the 50-minute Mother-to-Be Massage.

If you can’t get to the spa, there are several that will come to you. New York City based Mama Spa (212.591.1630; www.mamaspa.com) specializes in Prenatal Massage and Prenatal Spa Treatments—plus they can come to you. They also offer massage and reflexology services at their West 57th Street location. At home you can get: Pre/Postnatal Massage, Medical Massage, Reflexology, Head/Scalp Treatments, Hand and Foot Treatments and Manicures/Pedicures. And so the hubby doesn’t feel left out, Mama Spa also has "Daddy-O" massages.

Mama Spa follows current prenatal precaution and guidelines. They do not use "pregnancy massage tables" with the cut-out or the prone pillows that allow you to rest on your stomach; research has shown that prone (stomach) lying during massage stretches out the uterine ligaments and increases abdominal pressure. Instead, Mama Spa has pregnant women lay in either a side-lying or semi-reclining position with a special incline pillow.

SParties (954.421.6655; 877-SParties; www.sparties.com) will also bring the spa to you. Headquartered in Deerfield Beach, Florida, SParties services South Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Las Vegas. “SParties have been held in private homes, apartments, condos, offices, hotels, restaurants and conference centers, on the beach, and on a boat-- even aboard airplanes,” says founder Janet Rotella. SParties prices range according to the services and number of guests, starting from \$50; a la carte services begin at \$50. You can also custom design a SParty at no extra cost.

SParties also offers several services for pregnant women. “We only work on moms-to-be with pre-natal certified massage therapists,” says Rotella. “They work with special pillows and techniques, where they lay on their sides, that make mom feel more comfortable. We even offer relaxation techniques for labor and delivery and have done treatments on moms in either birthing centers or just prior to delivery.” But Rotella does have guidelines for her pregnant clients.

“Massage is considered unsafe in the first trimester of pregnancy and SParties refuses to work on moms-to-be during that time,” says Rotella. “We make all pregnant SParties submit a letter of approval from their OB and sign a medical waiver,” says Rotella.

Another treatment safe for moms is what Rotella calls “pedissage” or “manissage.” “Warm herbal towels are placed on the hands and arms or legs and feet, followed

by an exfoliating scrub, deep penetrating masque, soothing massage and cooling herbal mist spray,” explains Rotella. Reflexology and neck and shoulder massage are other options for pregnant women.

Puur Spa (877.267.1858; 858.205.7887; www.puurspa.com) is a nationwide mobile spa service that offers prenatal massage. Owners Kristina Schuff and Jeannie Owens have also found pregnant women like to get manicures and pedicures, which are especially hard to do yourself while pregnant. “In fact, Jeannie and I were both pregnant at the same time and in need of having our nails done—and could not touch our toes and do it ourselves,” says Schuff.

So just because you're pregnant doesn't mean you can't enjoy a day of beauty at the spa.

Ann Brown is a New York-based freelance writer whose beauty, entertainment, travel, & lifestyle articles have appeared in such publications as Black Enterprise, Big Apple Parent, Queens Parent, Upscale, ESSENCE, Honey, The Source, HealthQuest, Playboy, and Heart & Soul.

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