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**It's Time
for Some
Digital
Detox**

**Staying Fit
during Pregnancy**

**Gut Healthy Food
for Your Children**

Dengue Danger

Laugh Out Loud Kids!

Volume 1 • 2016
Family Wellness

Volume 2 • 2016
Nutrition & Healthy Living

Volume 3 • 2016
Child Health

Volume 4 • 2016
Child Development



Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail
Chairman, Positive Parenting Management Committee and Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist



Positive Parenting

expert
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Malaysian Paediatric Association
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“Parental awareness and education is vital in raising healthy children.”



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“Healthy eating habits and good food choices must be cultivated from young.”



Professor Dr Norimah A Karim
Honorary Secretary, Nutrition Society of Malaysia and Nutritionist



Professor Dr Poh Bee Koon
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Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia
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“A healthy pregnancy gives your baby a good start in life.”



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Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist and Past President, OGSM



Malaysian Psychiatric Association
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“Mental health is a key component in every child's total health and well-being.”



Dr Yen Teck Hoe
Consultant Psychiatrist



Associate Professor Dr M Swamenathan
Consultant Psychiatrist



National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia
www.lppkn.gov.my

“Strong families are central to raising children with values and principles.”



Dr Anjali Doshi-Gandhi
Deputy Director-General (Policy), LPPKN



Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology
<http://malaysiaclinicalpsychology.com/>

“If a child cannot learn in the way we teach, we must teach in a way the child can learn.”



Associate Professor Dr. Alvin Ng Lai Oon
Clinical Psychologist



Persatuan Pengasuh Bondaftar Malaysia
Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia
<http://ppbm.org/>

“Early childhood care and development helps children grow and discover their potential.”



P.H. Wong
President, PPBM



MMHA
Malaysian Mental Health Association
<http://mmha.org.my/>

“Mental health and resilience starts with the family.”



PTM
Malaysian Association of Kindergartens
<http://www.ptm.org.my/contact.html>

“A quality preschool education prepares children for formal schooling and lifelong learning.”

Family Is All About Connecting With Each Other

“Blood is thicker than water” – as a family, it is the deep social and emotional aspects of a familial relationship, and ultimately the love and loyalty towards each other. However, in this day and age, the onset of the Digital Age with its much-touted social media and social networking apps/programmes appear to have the opposite effect. In the past, families (especially during a family gathering) used to be gregarious with much talking and laughter, yet nowadays, most family gatherings tend to be much quieter, with more people burying their noses in their electronic gadgets instead of interacting with each other.

It is with this in mind that we have included an article on the importance for families to disconnect digitally and to reconnect emotionally. We hope that the tips and ideas contained within this article will be of help to you in your quest to ensure that your child experiences what a family should be, to reap the benefits of having a stable and loving family. In order to achieve this, striking a positive balance between our digital lives and real life is of paramount importance.

We have also included some words of wisdom from trusted professionals that highlight some of the common problems faced by parents such as how to recognise signs of child abuse, some useful tips on successfully breastfeeding your infant, tips to first-time parents on how to hold their newborn, and also some tips on how to be involved with your teen’s career planning, as opposed to planning it for them.

Lastly, we wish you success and happiness in your journey with your child. It is our greatest hope that your child will grow and prosper in a safe and healthy environment. We hope that this issue will be useful to you in your continuing efforts to raise a healthy, happy, and well-rounded child. We hope you will enjoy reading this issue. All our previous articles and issues can be accessed from our website, www.mypositiveparenting.org.



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It's Time for Some Digital Detox

There are vast differences in how the modern family spends their family time when compared to the yesteryears. Not only are kids nowadays immersed in electronic games (e.g. iPad, Xbox, Playstation, etc.) in their spare time rather than more physical games with their neighbourhood friends such as 'police and thief' or guli (marbles) – worst of all, even the adults are engrossed in their digital worlds.

It is worrying that many people spend way too much time with their noses buried in a screen and this sets a very bad example for our children. Spending too much time in the virtual world can lead to negative effects (e.g. stressed out either physically, emotionally or feeling burnt out).

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other points you need to consider as well, and at the end of this article, you will hopefully see how important it is to get digitally detoxed. Disconnect digitally, reconnect emotionally – it is not just for your child, but for the family as a whole.



Disconnect Digitally, Reconnect Emotionally



Dr Anjali Doshi-Gandhi
Deputy Director-General
(Policy)
National Population and
Family Development Board
Malaysia



Without a doubt, digital is the future. However, we do need to know where to draw the line and prevent ourselves from overindulging in it. Failure to do so could lead to digital addiction. It is fairly common nowadays to see parents handing their smartphone or tablet to their child to keep them entertained.

However, this is where parents will need to exercise self-discipline on their part to avoid the pitfalls. As parents, you should lead by example and serve as a role model for your child to emulate as he grows. As the saying goes “Too much of a good thing is a bad thing!”

No Replacement for Parents

One of the most common uses for electronic gadgets is as a ‘digital nanny’. All too often, parents take the easy way out by handing their toddler or young child a gadget for them to watch shows or play games, all for the sake of some peace and quiet.

However, this strategy is risky especially if it is an integral part of your child’s routine (the next section of this feature article will highlight the danger to his development). What starts off as an innocent way to pass the time could turn into a dangerous habit, and children as young as four are reportedly becoming hooked. Allowing toddlers to play with a tablet or smartphone excessively could lead to an addiction to digital technology and cause serious long-term effects.

Family Time Is Important

Without a doubt, quality family time is equally as important now as it was in the past. Sadly, too many Malaysian families are falling into the digital trap – families used to connect (especially over meals), but now it is becoming more common to see whole families together with their eyes glued to their gadgets and not talking much with each other.

As parents, you will need to build your relationship with your child. A solid relationship is critical and spending quality time together will ensure that he feels important and loved, thus allowing you to build a stronger bond as a family.

While there are numerous ways to achieve this, the key to succeeding is undivided attention. Every parent must commit to this – this means no multi-tasking during family time, i.e. no screen-time of any sort (e.g. games, texting, watching movies, etc.). You can establish some simple ‘traditions’ within your family, such as:

- **Family meals**– have these as often as possible. It can be a simple matter of sitting down together for a meal or preparing for a big gathering with family or friends. Involve your child in all aspects including menu selection, food and table preparation, serving the food, ensuring everyone eats together, and when clearing up after meals. All these activities give you plenty of opportunities to bond with your child, so you should make the most of it.

- **Homework/Schoolwork** – concentrate on using this as a bonding experience with your child. To achieve this, you should keep it as positive as possible and steer away from conflict.
- **Sports/Exercise** – getting the whole family out for some badminton, tennis, futsal, or just playing catch in the local *taman* is a great way to spend family time and some exercise together. This also includes outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, or going for picnics or camping together.
- **Family outings** – any outing that involves the whole family gives you plenty of opportunities for the whole family to connect. These outings can range from grocery shopping trips, attending shows or concerts, or even religious activities.

Remember, family time should be fun and enjoyable for everyone. In this way, your child will feel connected, happy, and above all, well loved. These ‘digital detox’ sessions may seem impossible at first but stick with it. By setting aside some time for the entire family to spend quality time together, you will find that it gets easier to connect with each other. There is only one cardinal rule – no electronic gadgets allowed!



Not all negative

Electronic gadgets have their uses, and can benefit your child if used with care. With proper monitoring, young children can benefit from:

- The stimulation to their senses and imagination.
- Helps promote their ability to listen and learn sounds/speech.
- Can help encourage cognitive learning and develop a more analytical mind, e.g. games or apps that focus on building innovative thinking and investigation skills, strategic thinking, and creativity.

Don't Let Digital Run Your Life

In your battle to make family times mean something again, you will need to set limits. Again, these should apply to the family as a whole. Of course, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ method to achieve this, so you will need to exercise your own discretion on the limits. Some of the most useful methods include:

- **Scheduling your child's screen-time** and ensuring that you adhere to the limits that you set, e.g. no screen-time before bed or during mealtimes.
- **Discuss the use of electronic gadgets with your child**, i.e. how, when, and where they should be used and most importantly when they should stop. You may also want to consider retaining control of gadgets either by installing some sort of parental app/programme or setting passwords to ensure that he does not have easy access to it.
- **Encouraging ‘tech-free’ conversations** – that means any phone or electronic device should be put aside when there is a conversation going on. Any conversation or discussion should hold one's full attention. Teach your child to hold eye contact during conversations as a means to encourage them to concentrate on ‘live’ conversations.
- **Placing the computer in a common area** will help discourage your child from abusing his computer privileges, as you will also have an easier time to keep an eye on him. It is also a good idea to limit his internet access by ensuring that he can only do so whenever you are around. This can be achieved either by installing a programme on the computer or setting up your modem/router to only allow access at certain times of the day. You should also keep tabs on his online activities.

Make a Conscious Effort

Choose your family over gadgets! Make it a point to have screen-free family time where everyone puts all their gadgets away. Have real and meaningful conversation or interactions with each other instead of poking away at those tiny little screens. Real life beats digital or virtual life anytime. By practising this yourself, you will make it easier to encourage your child to do the same. Since the same rules apply to everyone, there is absolutely no reason for him to request to be excused from this simple rule! **PP**

How a 'Digital' Family Can Affect Your Child's Development

The first two years of your child's life is a critical time for his brain development. Parenting should always be done with a hands-on approach.

Delegating the TV or electronic gadget to be a 'parent' will only stifle his early development – he needs to be allowed to explore, play, and interact with real people (e.g. parents, siblings, other family members) to encourage healthy physical and social development. Research has also indicated that excessive usage of electronic gadgets can result in detrimental effects to a child's development (mental, physical, emotional, etc.).

Limit Screen-Time

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents establish "screen-free" zones at home by making sure there are no televisions, computers or video games in children's bedrooms and by turning off the TV during dinner. Children and teens should engage with entertainment media for no more than one or two hours per day, and that should be high-quality content. It is important for kids to spend time on outdoor play, reading, hobbies, and using their imaginations in free play.

The AAP recommends that infants and children below two years old should not be exposed to any kind of screen (e.g. TV, smartphones, or any other electronic devices with screens). Since a child's brain will rapidly develop during these first few years, children should learn by interacting with real people and not inanimate objects, i.e. screens.

It also recommends that children aged between two and five years should not be exposed to screens for more than an hour daily, while children aged between five and 18 years should not be exposed for more than two hours a day.

Keep it 'Real' not Virtual

Allowing unrestricted screen time will leave him with less time for other important activities such as exercise, studying/reading, doing homework, or spending quality time with family and friends. However, allowances may



be made if your child needs to use a computer to do his homework. Do bear in mind that the real danger comes from non-educational or leisure screen-time.

Light emitted from electronic devices disrupts our sleep cycle (also known as circadian rhythm). Nothing beats a good night's rest so if you are in the habit of watching TV or checking your Facebook or emails before you sleep, the light from the screen can disrupt not just the quality of your sleep, but also that of the people around you (i.e. your spouse and child). Similarly, exposure to screen activities prior to sleep affects the duration and quality of sleep of your child, often leaving him feeling tired, moody and lacking attention the next day.

A double-edged sword

Before you decide to lock all your electronic gadgets away, there are some positive aspects. It can be a useful learning tool which can aid your child's development, provided care is exercised in its usage. As parents, you will need to constantly monitor your child's screen-time to ensure that he does benefit from its use and that he is not abusing his privileges.

Not everything digital is bad provided you exercise some caution in how you allow your child to use it. Used correctly, electronic gadgets make great educational tools. Do take note, however, that it is very easy for your child to abuse his screen-time privileges, so it is up to you to take on the policing/monitoring role seriously.

Some of the drawbacks of consistently indulging in too much screen-time include:

- **Obesity** – when your child spends more time with electronic gadgets, he will spend less time on physical activities, not to mention the possible habit of eating while enjoying his screen-time. It is easier to overeat as he will not be focused on his meal and the lack of physical activity also increases his risk of becoming overweight/obese.
- **Irregular sleep** – having too much screen-time can disrupt your child's sleep as he may have trouble falling asleep or develop an irregular sleep schedule. A lack of sleep can cause fatigue or lead to an increase of snacking.
- **Behavioural problems** – studies have shown that children who spend more than two hours daily on the TV or computer tend to have more emotional, social and attention problems.
- **Violence** – over-exposure to violence on screens will also desensitize children to violence. This may result in children learning to accept violent behaviour and viewing it as the right way to solve problems.
- **Less time for play** – spending too much time on electronic gadgets leaves your child with less time for active, creative play.



There is also the added risk of suffering injuries to the eye, neck, back, or wrist.

Caution! Scary or upsetting (e.g. violent programmes, etc.) shows or content may disrupt his sleep and later development. Researchers found that children exposed to TV with adult content at age one subsequently did poorly on cognitive tests at age four. Similarly, four-year-olds who watched these TV shows also scored poorly on the same cognitive tests.

The 'Gift of Boredom'

Nowadays, the danger lies in being over-stimulated. Children need to learn how to deal with boredom. By letting your child learn to cope with his boredom, he will be able to attain greater self-sufficiency and be less likely to become a digital addict.

If your child does have free time on his hands, here are some ideas on what you can encourage him to do with his boredom:

- ### Tips on screen-time use:
- Always preview the content to ensure it is appropriate for your child. One thing to keep in mind is that your child may not learn the intended lesson from the content, so you will need to have a 'debriefing' session with him to recap.
 - Do not leave the TV programme on in the background. Researchers have found that leaving a TV on in the background will distract children even if they are not watching it. Furthermore, parents were also found to spend less time interacting with their child if the TV was on and the quality of the interaction between parent-child also decreased.
 - If your child is old enough to use the computer for his school work, either limit his screen-time or ensure that he takes frequent breaks, preferably every half hour, whenever he uses it (preferably to do some calisthenics or light physical activity). There is plenty of evidence linking the risks of obesity with sedentary activities such as long hours of computer usage.

- **Get physical** – play tag, badminton, futsal, or any other physical game. Not only will the exercise benefit him, playing together with him also gives you a unique bonding opportunity.
- **Get social** – encourage him to go out and interact with other kids around his age. Social media (e.g. Facebook, etc.) is a virtual world and cannot replace the real world which teaches us life lessons.
- **Get a hobby** – this can run the gamut from arts and craft, fishing, flying kites, collecting things (e.g. stamps, etc.), bird watching, astronomy, cooking, photography, music, gardening, and the list just goes on and on. **PP**

Don't be Blinded by Digital Dazzle



The digital world is a virtual world. Instead of spending the bulk of your time on the computer, watching TV, texting on your phone, spend more quality time with your family. It is far better to build stronger family ties and in the process, make lifelong memories and create a positive environment for your child.

One of the strongest experiences that will set the tone for his future lies in his relationship with you. As such, the family is an integral part of this equation. He will learn everything from you, including your reliability and approachability. Therefore, it would not be surprising if he considers your electronic gadgets to be his competitor for your attention. What is more, he will also emulate your digital habits as he grows.

Social or Anti-social?

Take the current trend of social media for example. For better or worse, too many people have become ensnared by this trend and spend a lot of time enslaved to it. If you find yourself checking your Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or any other form of social media,

on a frequent basis and you find that real life is getting in the way of your virtual life, then it is time to take a step back and re-evaluate your priorities.

To begin, plan a digital detox for yourself. Spend an entire weekend away from your handphone or computer. Relax and enjoy the time with your family. It doesn't have to be a vacation to a tropical island in the middle of nowhere – the important thing is to spend quality time together with your family which is uninterrupted by anything digital. Turn off your phone or leave it in the car or at home if you have to!

Mini-me

Don't forget that your child is watching you. If you are constantly on your handphone for instance, it sends a message to him that it is alright to do the same. You are their role model after all. Additionally, the time you spend focused on your electronic gadget is time away from your child. Switch your attention to him instead – focus on him by having a discussion about his latest hobby or ask him for his thoughts on something. If he is too young to talk, you can still shower him with attention – he will love you more for it.

You may find it difficult to digitally detox in the beginning, but stick with it. Not only can it be done, it should be done regularly. There are simply too many reasons why you should do it! After all, in addition to the benefits to your family and your child, there are just as many benefits to yourself as well. You will find yourself better rested and less stressed. All of this will contribute to a healthier and happier you. **PP**

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Staying Fit during Pregnancy

By **Dr Krishna H Kumar**, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, and Past President of Obstetrical and Gynaecologist Society of Malaysia (OGSM)

Regular exercise helps you to maintain your health, and having a regular exercise routine can improve your posture (thus reducing lower back and hip pain), help you avoid excessive pregnancy weight gain, alleviate discomforts such as backaches and fatigue, and improves your prenatal fitness level and strength.

In order to accomplish this, it is a good idea to incorporate some form of strength-based exercises for muscle fitness – this can be achieved with weights or specific exercises that use your own body weight. Try to avoid high-impact exercises (e.g. jumping jacks, sports such as football, etc.) as much as possible as they may do more harm than good. You may opt to do pilates, walking, swimming, yoga, or other similar forms of exercise to help keep your muscle tone.

What is your exercise background?

It is not advisable to start doing strenuous exercises if you did not do so regularly before you became pregnant. Make sure your fitness instructor knows about your pregnancy. Keep in mind that exercises that are beneficial do not necessarily have to be strenuous.

Be sure to start off slow if you are new to exercise. You can get off to a quick start with short walks around the local *taman* – expect to spend about 15-20 minutes at an easy walk that leaves you breathing comfortably and not gasping for air. Once you are accustomed to this, gradually increase the intensity either by increasing your walking speed or the duration of your walk. Always keep tabs on your breathing – make sure that you are able to breathe with ease and not fighting for your breath as that may mean less oxygen for your baby.



Are you a seasoned fitness buff? If you are, it is advisable to tone down your routine a little just to be on the safe side. For instance, if you are into running, keep it up but do shorter runs than usual. If you lift weights or jump about a lot, switch to lighter weights and change to low impact exercises (e.g. squats instead of jumping jacks). Remember to exercise in moderation. The key is to listen to your body when you are exercising – if something feels wrong (e.g. uncomfortable or too strenuous), then you should stop immediately and avoid that particular exercise for now.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise daily or on as many days of the week as possible, unless there is a medical situation that prevents you from doing so (e.g. pregnancy complication).

Keep your routines fluid

Depending on which trimester you are in, you will need to vary your exercise routine accordingly. You should exercise with caution during your **first trimester** as the highest rate of miscarriages happen during this trimester.

The **second trimester** normally puts less strain on you and with a baby bump that is still easily manageable, you can increase the intensity of your exercise if you feel up to it.

The **third trimester** is more physically demanding as your baby bump is a substantial burden. You may continue exercising provided that your doctor does not caution you against it. However, do consider doing only low-impact exercises (i.e. no jumping, bouncing, or running) and avoid using heavy weights (as they will apply too much pressure on the ligaments and tendons of your joints).

Target the right muscles

It is a good idea to focus on the muscles in your back, legs and thighs. These are the muscles that will bear the brunt of weight from your baby bump as your pregnancy progresses. Chances are high that you will feel lower back pain if you have not been exercising.

So what can you do to target these muscles? Try simple exercises such as a **glute bridge** (works the muscles in your buttocks), do the **angry cat pose** (helps stretch your back muscles), do **squats** (works your leg muscles and glutes), and **kegel exercises** (works your pelvic floor muscles).

Other considerations

There are several basic things you will need to keep in mind, namely:

- make it a point to **warm-up** before exercising and to **cool down** when you are done.
- **stay active daily**. If you can't do your normal 30 minutes of walking, try to fit in whatever you can. Doing less is better than doing nothing at all.
- if the weather is very hot, **avoid strenuous exercises**.
- stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- are you attending a fitness class? If you are, ensure that you have a **qualified instructor** and that he/she knows about your pregnancy.
- **avoid high-risk exercises** as much as possible. This includes cycling (especially racing and downhill mountain bikes), hockey, or gymnastics. Falls may risk damage to your unborn baby.

Stay alert!

Stop exercising and consult your gynaecologist if you:

- experience any
 - vaginal bleeding,
 - sudden gush of fluid from the vagina or a trickle of fluid that leaks steadily,
 - chest pain,
 - abdominal pain,
 - pelvic pain,
 - or persistent contractions.
- there is a sudden absence or decrease in foetal activity.
- suddenly feel
 - faint, dizzy, nauseous, or light-headed
 - cold or clammy.



Find a Routine that Works for You

Just like the saying “different strokes for different folks”, everyone will have their own preference when it comes to their exercise routine. The main thing is for you to find an exercise routine that is safe and yet excites you – after all you might as well find something that you enjoy doing if you intend to do it regularly. **PP**

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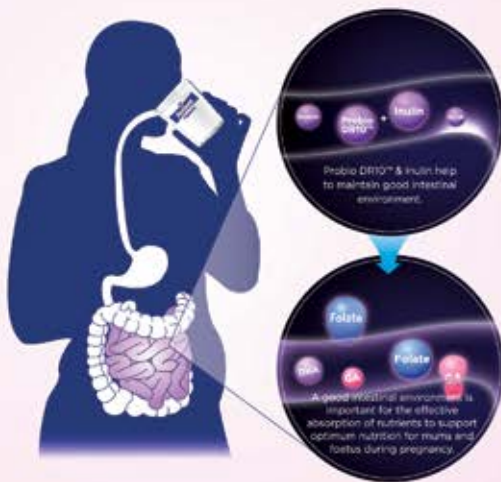
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Carbohydrate	g	17.3	19.5
Fat	g	4.4	1.1
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Gangliosides	mg	2.3	2.3

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How to Hold Your Newborn

By **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail**, Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist

Bonding with your newborn is one of the most important and satisfying aspects of caring for him. Physical closeness, especially through skin-to-skin contact, will promote a better emotional connection with him. This connection helps you to form a stronger bond with him, thus helping his emotional growth.

However, handling a newborn can be intimidating, especially if you have not had any experience before. While their fragility can be daunting, you just need to learn some basic things and you'll soon be handling your newborn with confidence.

Basic facts to remember

Before you even touch your newborn, always ensure that anything he comes into contact with is clean. That includes your clothes and especially your hands (e.g. wash your hands with soap or use a hand sanitiser before you handle him). It is important to ensure that everyone handling him is also clean as he can easily fall sick, since his immune system is still weak.

Always, always support your newborn's head and neck whenever you pick him up or hold him. While holding or carrying him, be very careful not to shake him. Shaking, regardless whether it was done out of frustration or in a playful manner, can lead to bleeding in the brain and possibly death. The same caution applies to rough play such as jiggling him on your knees or throwing him up in the air and catching him.

How to lift your newborn



1. Always pay attention to your newborn's head, paying particular attention to the fontanelle (the soft spot at the top of his head). Since most newborns do not have strong neck muscles, you must always support his head and neck at all times.



3. As soon as you are confident that you have a solid hold of him, gently scoop him up and bring him toward your chest.

4. Ensure his head is cradled against your chest, then slide the hand that supported his bottom up toward his neck.



5. Gently position him until his head lies in the crook of your arm, making sure to continue supporting his neck as you do so.

6. This position allows you to easily maintain eye contact as you talk or sing to him.



- Alternatively, you can rest your newborn against your chest and shoulder while making sure his head/neck is supported. This position allows him to feel or hear your heartbeat and he can also look over your shoulder.



- Never carry your newborn if you are holding anything hot (e.g. a hot cup of coffee) or cooking. Should you need to go up or down any stairs, ensure that he is held securely and walk carefully.



- Everyone loves newborns! If one of your nephews/nieces or older folks wants to have a cuddle, you can gently place him into their arms while they are seated.

'Wearing' a newborn

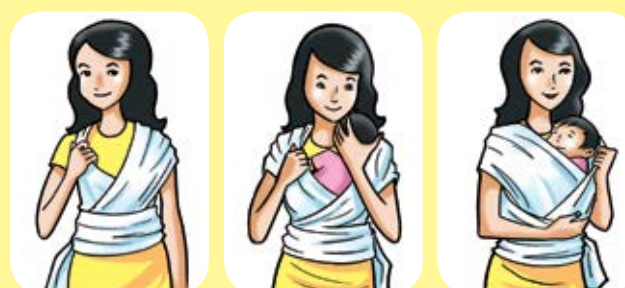
There are two popular methods that allow you to 'wear' your baby when you go out. One entails using an adjustable baby carrier and the other uses a wrap, which is essentially a long piece of cloth.

Using a baby carrier



1. Fasten all the necessary straps of your baby carrier. Adjust the buckles and straps but ensure that there is some space left for your newborn.
2. Use both hands to gently slide him into the baby carrier. If necessary, get your partner to help you slide him in. It is recommended to have him facing you.
3. Make the final adjustments to the straps. Ensure that the baby carrier is fully supporting his back and neck. His head should rest comfortably against your chest facing either to the left or right.

Using a wrap



1. Tie the baby wrap around your body following the manufacturer's instructions.
2. Gently slide your newborn into the wrap, taking care to let him curl into a comfortable foetal position. If necessary, get your partner to help you to slide him in.
3. Now carefully reposition the wrap so that it covers and supports his body. Always keep a secure hold on him as you make the final adjustments to the wrap.

Caution! Do not place him facing out or into a horizontal or 'hammock' position as these positions are not safe.

Basic safety tips

Always position your newborn with his chin up to ensure that his airway remains open. Never 'wear' him with his chin curled down toward his chest as it may disrupt his breathing. If you use a wrap, try to 'wear' him as high up your chest as possible with his face visible – the wrap should be wound around his body in such a way as to provide him with the necessary support.

An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association

Recognising Child Abuse

By **Dr Mary Joseph Marret**, Consultant Paediatrician



The World Health Organisation lists violence as a major human concern. We know from studies such as the United Nations Report on Violence against Children that children face violence within the community in a variety of settings, including their homes and at school. This exposes them to physical danger, injury, as well as psychological harm. There is growing evidence from research such as the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) study that exposure to trauma in childhood increases the risk of smoking, obesity, depression, addiction, heart or lung diseases and cancer in adulthood. To improve the wellbeing of children as well as the overall health of the community, it is important to address the problem of child abuse.

Protecting children from violence requires participation from everyone within the community. Children should receive the best care and protection from their own families. Parents have an important role in providing children with basic needs, nurturing them, guiding them as well as protecting them from harm.

Raising children is a challenging task. Sometimes adults may act inappropriately in a way that harms children. This could happen due to ignorance, stress, unrealistic expectations or inability to control their own behaviour. The problem may be hidden because children have difficulty speaking up and adults may not wish to reveal the problem.

Physical abuse

Any child with bruises, cuts, burns or fractures without a reasonable explanation may be experiencing physical abuse, especially when they are found to have multiple injuries on repeated occasions.

It is important to recognize that the following actions are abusive and should never be considered acceptable ways to discipline a child:

- Any beating that causes injury with bruises and bleeding
- Hitting babies or toddlers who are too young to understand what is right and wrong
- Kicking and punching
- Shoving a child against something hard or pushing him until he falls down
- Bending or twisting a child's arms or legs
- Applying hot objects, hot liquids or applying other substances that cause burns or scalds, e.g. rubbing chilli on the skin, lips or mouth
- Hitting a child during a quarrel with someone else
- Hitting a child out of anger or frustration over a matter that does not concern him
- Punishing a child due to unreasonable expectations, e.g. hitting a two-year-old for wetting his pants
- Hitting a child while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Depriving a child of food, drink or making him stand outside in the sun or rain
- Locking a child within a confined space
- Pulling a child by the hair

Fragile ! Handle with care...

Young babies require the most care and attention. Sometimes, episodes of non-stop crying may stretch the patience of parents and caregivers. In such situations, it is important to contact a family member or friend to get support and stay calm. Never shake, punch or hit babies to stop them from crying. These actions are very dangerous. They can cause severe head injuries, bleeding in the eyes and other internal injuries that may endanger their life.

If you have difficulty controlling the behaviour of your child, ask a family member or friend for support and seek professional help.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse happens when there is repeated negative interaction between a parent/caregiver and a child. This can cause children to suffer from insecurity, poor self-esteem and result in psychological as well as behavioural problems.

Examples of emotional abuse:

- Repeatedly scolding and criticizing a child without any positive encouragement
- Constant comparison with others who are “better” or “smarter”
- Repeatedly ignoring a child and depriving him of love and attention
- Excluding a child from treats and presents given to other children
- Using negative labels to address children such as “useless” or “stupid”
- Allowing a child to witness frightening scenes, e.g. violent arguments between adults

Children learn by imitation. Parents, teachers and adults who care for children should lead by example by becoming positive role models. Children who receive regular encouragement to develop talents and receive positive feedback for things that they have done correctly, will grow into confident adults with good self-esteem.

Sexual abuse

Never ignore a child who tells you that someone has touched his private parts. It is unusual for young children to make such statements without some kind of direct experience. Explain to him that he has a right to say “No!” if someone asks him to do something or touches him in a way that makes him uncomfortable. Be aware that sexual abuse is a problem that affects both boys and girls.

Encourage your children to approach you if they have any problems, and always be prepared to listen. Children become reluctant or afraid to speak up if they feel that parents and teachers are not willing to listen. They may also be frightened if the abuser has threatened them or told them that no one would believe their story. Stand up for your child. Assure him that you will protect him from anyone who tries to hurt him. Do seek professional help if you have any concerns that your child may have been sexually abused.

Warning signs of possible sexual abuse:

- Pain, bleeding or discharge around the private parts or staining of undergarments
- Sexual behaviour towards others
- Sudden rebellious or aggressive behaviour
- Smoking, taking drugs or alcohol
- Appearing sad, depressed, withdrawn or suicidal
- Pregnancy
- Playing truant and running away
- Difficulty sleeping, having recurrent nightmares and poor appetite

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child’s family fails to provide for his needs even when they have resources available. Most families understand that they should provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, health care and education. However many are not aware of how important it is to supervise their children. Lack of supervision can expose children to many kinds of danger such as drowning, being run over by a vehicle or being trapped in an enclosed space that could result in heat exhaustion or suffocation. Children who are left unsupervised may also be abducted or become a target of sexual abuse.

Help to protect children

Children depend on adults for help. Do not delay if you have concerns that a child may have been abused. Your prompt action could help to save a child’s life. You may contact any of the following agencies:

- The national hotline Talian Nur at 15999 or the nearest Welfare office
- Your local police station
- Your nearest hospital **PP**

An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association

Nutrition & Healthy Living

- Nutri Tips and Insights
- Breastfeeding
- Complementary Feeding
- Healthy Recipes



Guess What?!

Breastfeeding requires on average 400-600 calories per day, mother would have to swim at least 30 laps in a pool or cycle uphill for an hour daily to loose the same amount.

How Long Should You Be Breastfeeding?

It's recommended that mothers exclusively breastfeed for the first six months of a baby's life, followed by breastfeeding in combination with complementary foods until two years of age.

Achieving 6 Months of Exclusive Breastfeeding

By **Prof Poh Bee Koon**, Nutritionist

Effortless. Biological. Beautiful. A loving source of nourishment and comfort. That's what the world tells us and what most new mothers think about breastfeeding. Though largely true, it hardly paints the whole picture.

In reality, mothers today live a hectic and fast-paced life. A career, chores and family commitment all add up at the end of the day and can take a toll on the mother both physically and mentally – and having a newborn to breastfeed on top of that doesn't make it any easier.

Being successful in exclusively breastfeeding your child has its perks:

Mother	Baby
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● burn extra calories ● lose weight faster ● helps uterus return to its pre-pregnancy size ● reduce uterine bleeding after birth ● decreased risk of diabetes in later life ● improved blood sugar control, and good cholesterol profile ● lower risk of heart problems ● reduced risk of breast cancer ● lower risk of osteoporosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lower risk of having asthma or allergies ● more resistant to disease and infection early in life ● fewer dental cavities as they grow ● less likely to become obese later in childhood ● higher IQ

But let's face it, six months of exclusive breastfeeding isn't the easiest thing in the world to do and quite a number of mothers may not be able to follow through. In fact, in Malaysia, less than 15% of infants are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their lives. This is probably because mothers are faced with numerous challenges:

1. Many new mothers are discouraged and sometimes give up because they think they have failed for not being able to produce enough milk for their child.
2. Some mothers are scared to even start because they expect breastfeeding to be extremely painful and uncomfortable.
3. Some are too busy at work and too exhausted once they get home. Easier and more convenient to use formula.
4. Lack of proper support (from partner/family members) and insufficient education about the practical aspects of breastfeeding can lead to anxiety and a greater likelihood of stopping nursing.
5. Too little expressed milk. Mothers feel the time and hassle spent pumping isn't worth it and ultimately give up.
6. Feel unwelcomed or uncomfortable when breastfeeding in a public place.

Tips for successful six-month exclusive breastfeeding

1. **Equip yourself with all the relevant breastfeeding information** (breastfeeding techniques, positions, etc.) and be mentally prepared. Take up a class if you have the time or join a breastfeeding support group – they will be able to give you much needed advice when the time comes.
2. **Practice makes perfect** – no one gets it right the first time. Trying different latching positions may also help you discover the best position that's comfortable and relaxing for you and your child.

3. **Start breastfeeding immediately after birth** and build your milk supply to meet your baby's demand by feeding him over and over again or whenever he/she is hungry.
4. **Learn to express your milk and plan how, where and when to store** it properly.
5. **Talk with your employer** on making it more comfortable for you to express milk at the office and whether your working hours can be made more flexible. Chances are they have a good breastfeeding policy at work and know how to properly treat your needs because they have been through it before.
6. **Stay hydrated, eat a healthy and nutritious diet**, don't stress yourself out and get enough rest.
7. **Don't keep your problems to yourself.** Talk to your spouse and other trusted family members about it. Get their support and encouragement. You may be doing all the hard labour but that doesn't mean other people can't help you through it – make it a team effort and share your load.
8. **Drown the haters; your child is your priority.** Prepare well for breastfeeding if you decide to go out. Better yet, make your own breastfeeding outing kit with all the things you'll need (i.e. proper breastfeeding clothes, towels, ointment).

Supplementing with formula early on is a very tempting option especially when exhaustion, and sometimes even frustration, takes hold of you. Nevertheless, breast milk is the best and most holistic source of nutrition for your child for which there is no equal.

Don't give up, follow these tips and muster the determination and strength – which you'll find every time you look at your baby's cute, innocent face – to continue breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months and continue breastfeeding even after you've started giving baby complementary foods. You won't regret it! **PP**

Breastfeeding Support & Advocacy Groups in Malaysia

National Lactation Centre - <http://national-lactation-centre.weebly.com/>
 Malaysian Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program - <http://malaysianbfpc.org/>
 World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action - <http://waba.org.my/>
 Breastfeeding Information Bureau (Malaysia) - <https://www.facebook.com/BIBMALAYSIA>
 Susuibu.com - <http://susuibu.com/>

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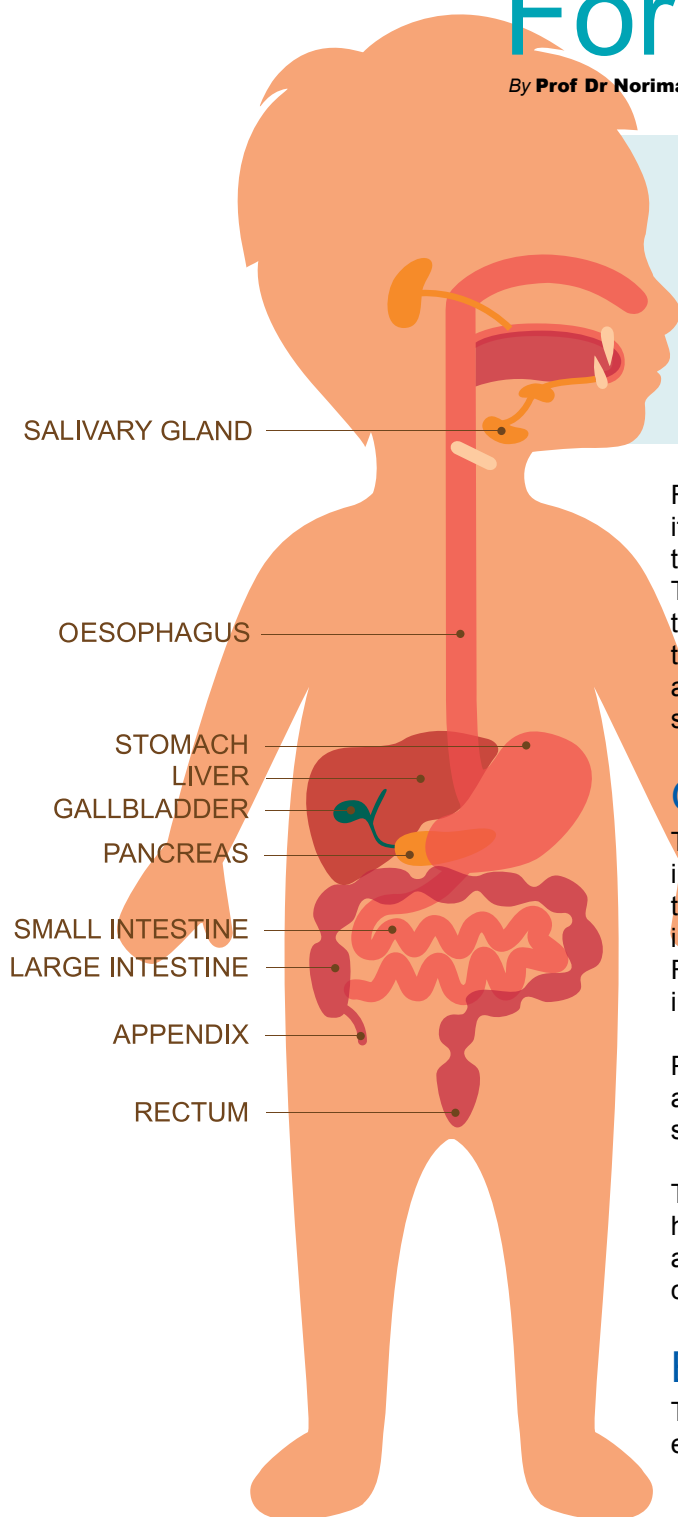
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Gut Healthy Food For Your Children

By Prof Dr Norimah A Karim, Nutritionist & Honorary Secretary of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia

Does your child always complain of an upset stomach? Are his bowel habits out of control sometimes? As parents, you may be wondering what makes his tummy tick and how to improve his digestive health.



Foremost, you need to know what the digestive system does; it helps to break down food into energy and basic nutrients to be delivered to every cell in the body via the bloodstream. The digestive tract, which is part of this system, starts at the mouth and ends at the anus. Organs involved include the stomach, small intestine, pancreas, liver, gallbladder, and large intestine (bowel). So what is it about the digestive system that makes it so important?

Gateway to Health

The health of your child's digestive system is extremely important to his/her overall well-being. This is attributed to the fact that our digestive health is intimately linked to our immune, endocrine, circulatory and central nervous systems. Failure of the digestive system to work properly may result in impaired function of other parts of the body as well.

Poor gut health, which mostly involves bad dietary choices and habits, can lead to many gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms such as constipation, diarrhoea, indigestion and bloating.

These symptoms may be an indication of a more serious health problem but is often misinterpreted and their impact and significance to health misunderstood because they are so commonly seen in children.

Eat Well, Live Well

The foods we eat provide us more than just nutrients and energy; they also play an important part in regulating the

physiological processes of the body and also help in promoting health. It is important to note that a diet which is balanced, moderate and full of variety is the best choice for your child.

Having said that, some foods can be beneficial to your child's digestive health:

Probiotics

Probiotics are live bacteria that are good for health – though you don't necessarily need them to be healthy. Existing 'good' bacteria in your body help to move food through your gut and lower the amount of 'bad' bacteria that can cause problem.

Good examples of foods which contain probiotic bacteria include fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut and kimchi; *tempeh*; acidophilus milk; and fermented milk products such as yoghurt.

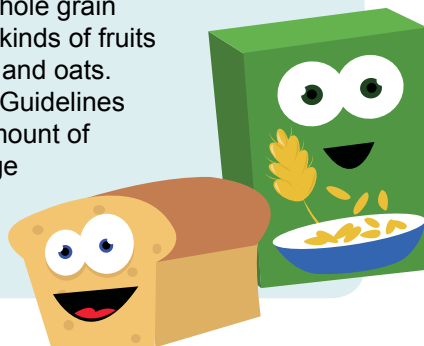
There are no specific dietary guidelines for the amount of probiotics a child should consume daily. However, probiotic research usually reports the amount they use to exert a specific health affect.



Dietary Fibre

Fibre is an important part of a healthy balanced diet. Dietary fibre can help in normalising bowel movement (no constipation or diarrhoea), lowering cholesterol levels, control blood sugar levels, maintain healthy weight and overall bowel health.

There are a variety of rich fibre sources such as wholemeal bread, whole grain cereals, brown rice, all kinds of fruits and vegetables, beans and oats. The Malaysian Dietary Guidelines recommend that the amount of fibre intake should range from 20 to 30g per day.



Being more physically active can also help your child maintain a normal BMI and lower blood glucose and cholesterol levels. This will reduce your child's future risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, colon and breast cancer as well as numerous digestive diseases.

Lifestyle choices and habits play a significant role in maintaining gut health. Help your child make the right gut-healthy choices today! **PP**

Digestive system's awesomeness!

- Our gastrointestinal tract produces about two litres of saliva every day.
- Surface area of the small intestine is almost the size of a tennis court!



Prebiotics

Prebiotics are not bacteria, they are non-digestible carbohydrates classed under dietary fibre that feed probiotic bacteria and assist in its growth. Some examples of prebiotic sources include bananas, onions, leeks, soybeans, sweet potatoes, asparagus and some whole grains (e.g. barley, oatmeal and wheat). There are no general dietary recommendations for prebiotics, therefore, include some prebiotic foods as part of your child's dietary fibre food choice.

Healthy eating habits also affect gut health. Prolonged bad eating habits such as consuming too much salt, sugar and fat, binge eating, late night eating, overeating, etc. should be curbed.

A healthy diet is just part of the solution. You should also encourage your child to be more active. Children require an average of 60 minutes of daily moderate intensity physical activity or a combination of several bouts of more vigorous aerobic exercises. Routine physical activities can help:

- encourage "good" bacteria to thrive in the gut
- maintain regular bowel movement and prevent constipation
- improve nutrient absorption

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Billions of Good Bacteria for a Healthy Digestive System

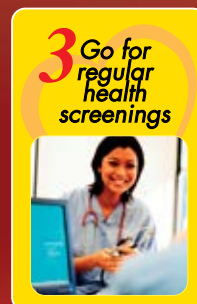
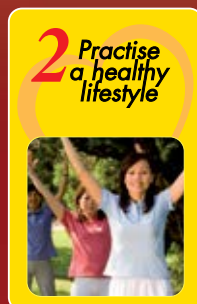
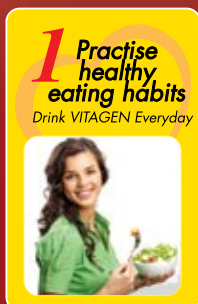
Why is your digestive health so important?

In Malaysia, diseases of the digestive system are the 5th principal cause of death and 7th principal cause of admission in government hospitals in 2011.*

A healthy digestive system is central to your overall health and wellbeing. Not only does it process food and transport important nutrients, vitamins, and minerals throughout your body, it is your body's first line of defence against diseases because 70% of your immune system lies in your digestive tract.

What can you do to improve your digestive health?

It's simple. What you need to do is to practise these simple steps TODAY!



Are all bacteria bad?

No, not all bacteria are bad for your health, there are good bacteria too. Your digestive tract is home to trillions of bacteria. A healthy digestive system should have a healthy balance of 85% good bacteria and 15% bad bacteria.

What happens inside?



- Good bacteria fights bad bacteria for nutrients



- Good bacteria blocks the growth of bad bacteria



- Good bacteria kills bad bacteria

What should you do when bad bacteria overpowers the good bacteria?

Unhealthy lifestyle, stress, unbalanced diet, aging, lack of exercise, consumption of antibiotics, and bacterial infection in the gut can cause microflora imbalance. You can replenish the good bacteria in your digestive system by consuming probiotics.

What are probiotics?

According to the World Gastroenterology Organisation, probiotics are live microbes that have been shown in controlled human studies to induce measurable benefits on intestinal health and immunity. **

* Data from the Ministry of Health, Health Facts 2012.
** Data from the World Gastroenterology Organisation.

Goodness of Probiotics

Probiotics can benefit your digestion if consumed regularly.

- Helps reduce risk of intestinal disturbances such as constipation, diarrhoea, ulcers, bloating, belching, bad breath, allergy, heartburn, and nausea
- Helps maintain a healthy bacteria balance by keeping the good bacteria in high levels
- Helps improve bowel movement
- Helps improve tolerance to milk
- Helps boost immune system
- Helps replenish good bacteria after taking antibiotics
- Helps with digestion



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Dining Out Healthily

By **Dr Tee E Siong**, Nutritionist & President of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia

Outside foods are often perceived as being unhealthy, i.e. they are oily, high in fat, or contain too much salt, flavourings and sugar. Consuming these in high amounts as part of a staple diet has been linked to an increased risk of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancers) which has become a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Malaysia.

So, does it mean that we should not eat out at all? While preparing your own meals at home is the preferred choice, this may not be possible every day, every meal. Indeed, a recent study found that more than 64% of Malaysians eat out at least once per day, while 12.5% of those who eat at home have at least one take-out meal. Children also eat out all the time; at the school canteen, at food stalls or cafes after school and at home, on days where they need to order take out from restaurants with delivery services.

Is it possible to make healthier choices when dining out? Yes, it is entirely possible to dine out healthily. Below are some tips to help you out when you have to eat out of home.

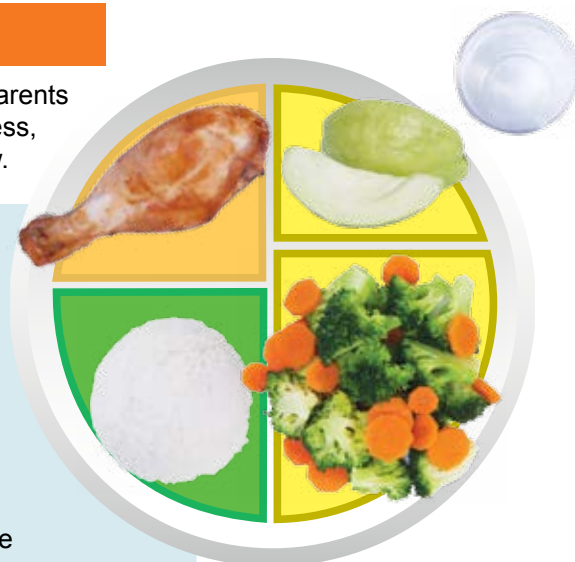
Tips To Dining Out Right

Today's packed and hectic schedule is exhausting and leaves less time for parents to prepare healthy and nutritious meals at home for their children. Nevertheless, healthy eating while dining can be achieved if you have the proper know-how.

Go for variety and balance

The right amount of variety of different foods is of the utmost importance. Remember, no one food can supply all the optimal nutrients your child needs. So make sure they get their nutrition by going for meals that have a variety of ingredients from all the major foods groups (cereals & cereal products; vegetables; fish, poultry, meat & legumes) in balanced amount.

If you find the portion is unbalanced (i.e. lack of veges or too much rice), ask to be served additional/reduced portions. Some stalls charge you for the extras, but your child's health is worth it. Too much of the same food is also not good even if it's considered 'healthy'.



Portion Plate for Children



Opt for healthier cooking methods

Whenever possible, choose foods prepared using healthier cooking methods (i.e. steamed, boiled, baked, roasted or braised). Here are some examples to help you start off:

Dishes	Healthier option
Fried fish	Steamed fish
Curry noodles or fried noodles	Noodles in clear soup
<i>Roti canai, roti tisu, roti boom</i>	Plain thosai, naan or chapati
Fried chicken	Steamed, roasted or grilled chicken
Pasta with cream-based gravy	Pasta with tomato-based gravy
Chicken burger	Tuna sandwich
<i>Nasi lemak</i> with fried chicken	White rice with grilled chicken
Fried <i>popia</i> or banana fritters	<i>Popia basah, pau</i> or steamed <i>apam</i>

Start teaching them early

Bad eating habits when dining out (and in) such as overeating, late night suppers (after 10 p.m), eating foods high in fats, salt and sugar too often or binge eating can be avoided if parents practice and teach the benefits of good eating habits early. Additionally, when dining out, ask for less salt, sugar and fat in meals. Preference for salt and sugar is shaped by dietary exposure from young, so the less salt and sugar children consume, the less they want as they grow older.

Share the love

Restaurants usually prepare their meals in adult portions, so try sharing instead of ordering individual meals. This way you reduce the amount of calories you and your child consume.

Don't be shy to demand for healthier meals when dining out; in fact, it should be a habit of every Malaysian family. Good and understanding vendors appreciate and respect our preference and will adjust to our needs. These are the eateries worth going to with the family.

To put it in a nutshell, when dining out, make it a point to

- [1] ask for suggestions on **healthier options**,
- [2] be aware of **the way your child's food is prepared**,
- [3] eat in **balance, moderation** and **variety**,
- [4] equip yourself with some **knowledge on good nutrition** and
- [5] make sure you **child is involved in this healthy lifestyle** you have chosen for the family.

Be aware of hidden traps

Watch out for hidden fat, salt and sugar in foods (i.e. meat or chicken fat, oil in gravy). To enhance the taste of their meals, some restaurants use too much flavouring. If possible, put in a request to use less of these items when cooking. Similarly, you can teach your child not to finish off soups or gravy that comes with the meal or add too much sauce or dressings as these contain a lot of salt.

Drink plain water

When you dine out, try to refrain from drinking sugar sweetened drinks. There is no shame in ordering plain water – squeeze a lemon or lime for flavour if you want. You may also have your child drink one glass before a meal so that they don't feel too hungry while waiting for their order.

Choosing fruits as dessert

Restaurants usually offer indulging desserts. Change it up a bit by ordering an assortment of fresh, cool fruits instead – fruits are generally low in calorie and taste great!

Finally, though making informed choices while dining out can help your family eat better and live healthier, you should at least try to cook one meal a day for the family. Here, you can choose the ingredients and cooking method for yourself. It's well worth the effort because ultimately, this will benefit the health of your family and it's cheaper too! **PP**

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Simple Baking Recipe

Baking might sound intimidating to some. However, there are many interesting and delicious recipes you can try using the oven. Prepare the dish with the help of your kids to spend some quality family time together. Here is an example of a recipe you can try out!

Pumpkin Apple Muffin

(12 muffins)

Ingredients

- 100 g (1 medium-sized) green apple, peeled and grated
 - 70 g (½ cup) pumpkin, cooked and pureed
 - 80 g (½ cup) raisins
 - 125 ml (½ cup) full cream milk
 - 190 g (¾ cup) honey
 - 1 egg, lightly beaten
 - 45 ml (3 tbsp) vegetable oil
 - 190 g (1 ⅓ cups) all-purpose flour
 - 90 g (⅔ cup) whole meal flour
 - 10 g (2 tsp) baking powder
 - 2 g (½ tsp) baking soda
 - 1 g (½ tsp) cinnamon powder
- } sieved together

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. In a large bowl, whisk egg, oil, honey and milk together.
3. Add grated apple, pumpkin puree and raisins into mixture and mix well.
4. Slowly add sieved flour into the batter. Stir briefly till you get a fluffy batter. Do not over-mix as this will make the muffins hard.
5. Grease the muffin tins or line them with muffin cups. Fill each cup ¾ full with the batter.
6. Bake for 20 minutes. Your muffins are ready when a tester (toothpick) inserted comes out clean.
7. Serve warm.



Nutrient content per muffin	
Calorie 205 kcal	Carbohydrate 38 g
Protein 3 g	Fat 4.6 g

Recipe courtesy of "Nutritionists' Choice Cookbook, Vol 1: Healthy Recipes for Your Little Ones" by Nutrition Society of Malaysia. To purchase this recipe book which includes 100 recipes, please email: president@nutriweb.org.my

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Child Health

- Allergy
- Immunisation
- Paediatrics Issues
- Digestive Health



Coughs and colds are pretty much a common illness. As parents, you will need to familiarise yourself with cough and cold management techniques. If you are taking care of him on your own, then you should also know whether or not a trip to his paediatrician is necessary.

Did you know?

The effectiveness of over-the-counter (OTC) cough syrups was studied in adults and not children. There is no clear indication that they react in the same way for children and there is only weak evidence that OTC cough syrups help adults. There are no home remedies or OTC cough syrups that will hasten your child's recovery. Colds normally run their course in 7-10 days. While some OTC medicines may relieve the symptoms, their actual efficacy is highly questionable.

The Cough Syrup Conundrum

By **Dato' Dr Musa Mohd Nordin**, Consultant Paediatrician and Neonatologist

Always see your child's paediatrician if he has a cough or cold, and give him the prescribed medication accordingly. There are also other ways to deal with cold symptoms which your child's paediatrician can advise you on.

What's inside

When it comes to OTC cough syrups, they typically contain a mixture of ingredients with one main active ingredient, namely:

1. **dextromethorphan** or DM (found in cough suppressants)
2. **guaifenesin** (found in cough expectorants)
3. pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine (found in decongestants)
4. **brompheniramine, chlorpheniramine maleate, and diphenhydramine** (found in certain antihistamines)

Knowing the active ingredients can help you avoid accidentally giving your child an overdose if he is on more than one type of medication.



What to watch out for

If you do have an older child and you opt to use OTC cough syrups, then always ensure that you follow the safety instructions on the label or the inside leaflet. However, you may want to talk to your child's paediatrician first to get his take on whether your child is ready to use OTC cough syrups.

If you have checked, then keep in mind several points when using OTC cough syrups, namely:

- **Dosage** – never give a larger dose than is recommended
- **Frequency** – never shorten the time between doses
- **Mixing with other medicines** – never combine or mix with other prescription or OTC medications as your child may end up ingesting more of a particular ingredient than he should.
- **Keep it out of reach** – always ensure that your child is not able to access OTC cough syrups on his own, or any kind of medication for that matter.

Should you ignore any of these, you run the risk of endangering your child so make sure you keep track!

Danger signs

However, if your child is sick and exhibits the following danger signs, you should take him to see his paediatrician immediately:

- He is lethargic and doesn't respond well.
- He complains that his chest feels tight or that it hurts.
- He starts wheezing or has difficulty breathing.
- He keeps tugging his ear or complains of ear ache.
- He does not urinate for more than eight hours.
- He has blood in his mucus or saliva.

If you have a very young child who is sick, take him to see his paediatrician immediately if you see the following signs:

- Dry diapers in a six to eight hour period, if he cries with no tears, has sunken eyes, or has dry lips.
- He is fussy and cannot be calmed by your usual methods (e.g. singing, rocking, or giving him a pacifier).
- He has a fever of 38°C or more and is three months old or younger.
- He has a fever for more than three days.

The best thing to do

Good old TLC (tender loving care) will normally work wonders. Any child who is sick will appreciate that extra TLC, and even if it doesn't cure their cough it certainly will make them feel better. Of course, you should also ensure that he stays hydrated – stick to breastmilk for babies below 12 months. Older children should drink plenty of water, diluted juice, or broth. Take care of his scratchy throat too. If he has trouble eating his usual foods, give him soft foods such as puddings, chicken soup, porridge, etc.

If he suffers from nasal congestion, there are some ways to provide him with some relief. You can use saline nasal drops or sprays for young children or a bulb syringe to help clear baby's nose. You can also use a cool-mist humidifier to add more humidity or moisture to the air. This helps ease breathing if he has dry, congested nasal passages. Just be sure to keep the humidifier clean and use it sparingly. **PP**

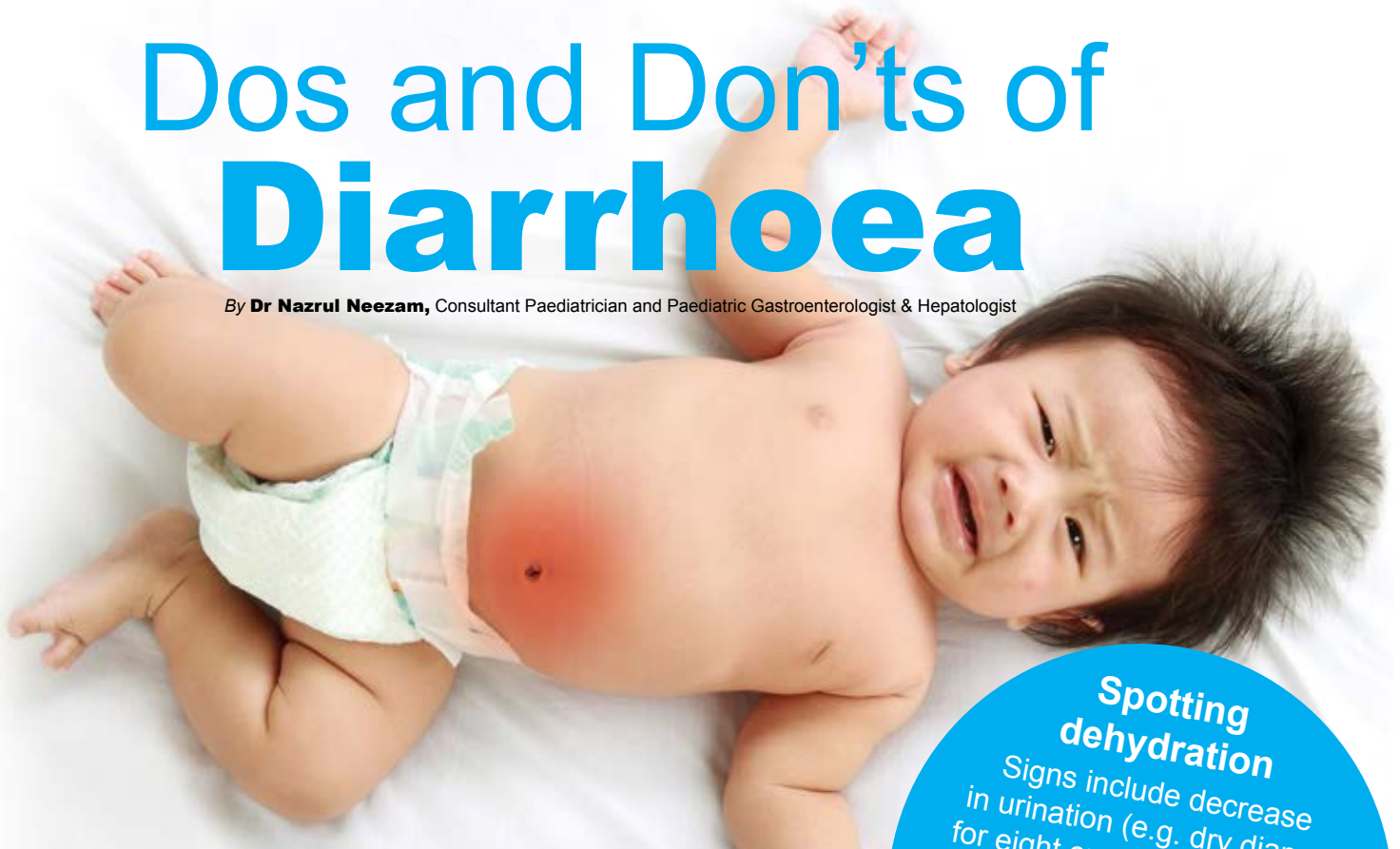
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Malaysian Paediatric Association

Dos and Don'ts of Diarrhoea

By **Dr Nazrul Neezam**, Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Gastroenterologist & Hepatologist



Younger children can and often do suffer from mild diarrhoea from time to time. Should your child have mild diarrhoea, keep an eye on him. Mild diarrhoea can last between three to six days and he may have loose stools for several days after his diarrhoea clears up. So long as he continues to act normally and consumes fluids and foods in adequate quantities, then there is no cause for concern over the loose stools. However, diarrhoea can be a life-threatening condition for infants especially if it is accompanied by fever or blood stained stools.

Spotting dehydration

Signs include decrease in urination (e.g. dry diapers for eight or more hours or not urinating for 12 hours or more), crying with no tears, high fever, dry mouth, weight loss, extreme thirst, listlessness, too weak to walk, and sunken eyes.

Let him continue eating a normal diet during the episode of mild diarrhoea. If he is still being breastfed, then continue doing so. Do discuss it with your baby's paediatrician if he seems bloated or gassy after eating, to see if he needs a temporary change in diet.

If your child has moderate diarrhoea, you can easily care for him from home. If he is still being breastfed, continue to do so. Just be sure to keep a close eye on him at all times, ensure he takes sufficient fluids and any medication he has been prescribed. You should also follow any advice his paediatrician gives you.

Determining the severity

So how will you know whether your child is suffering from a mild case of diarrhoea, or a severe bout? Well, if he has mild diarrhoea, he will pass a few diarrhoea stools a day. If he has moderate diarrhoea, he will pass more (less than 10) diarrhoea stools a day. If he has severe diarrhoea, he will pass more than 10 diarrhoea stools a day and should be taken to see his paediatrician immediately.

Dos

- ✔ **Give him plenty of fluids.** Water and/or vegetable or chicken broth (without the fat) is best.
- ✔ **Feed him as normally as possible.** Alternatively, frequently feed him small amounts of solids.
- ✔ **Keep a look-out for dehydration.**
- ✔ **Give him suitable anti-diarrhoeal medications for children** but only as advised by your paediatrician.
- ✔ **Maintain hygiene** – always wash your hands after changing his diapers and after he goes to the toilet. Failure to do so can prolong and possibly worsen the condition.

Don'ts

- ✗ **Do not make your own oral rehydration solution (ORS)** unless instructed to do so by your child's paediatrician.
- ✗ **Do not substitute ORS with fruit juices or sugary drinks** such as carbonated drinks when treating diarrhoea – they contain less than the ideal content and concentration of electrolytes.
- ✗ **Do not stop your child from eating** if he is hungry.
- ✗ **Do not feed him oily, fatty, or spicy foods.**

DANGER SIGNS

You should immediately take your child to see his paediatrician if:



he is younger than 6 months



frequent diarrhoea (more than eight times within eight hours)



frequent vomiting



there is blood in his stool



he has a high fever (more than 38°C)



he has abdominal pain



refuses to drink or has no appetite for liquids



he urinates less frequently (no urination for 12 hours or more, or wets fewer than six diapers per day)



there are no tears when he cries



Control fluid, control diarrhea

Diarrhea remains the second leading cause of death due to infections among children under 5 years old worldwide.¹

The main issue with acute diarrhea is fluid loss through stools which can result in dehydration and loss of electrolytes if left untreated.²

Diarrhea is defined as the passage of loose or watery stools of 3 times or more in 24-hour period.³

Consult your doctor if you or your child is suffering from diarrhea.



References:

1. Lanata C.F. et al. PLoS One 8(9):e72798
2. King CK, et al. MMWR 2003; 52 (RR16):1-16
3. Guidelines on the Management of Acute Diarrhea in Children 2011. College of Paediatrics, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia, Malaysian Paediatric Association.

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Gut Health and Allergies

By **Dr Amir Hamzah Abdul Latiff**, Consultant Paediatrician and Consultant Clinical Immunologist/Allergist

While it may seem strange at first, our gut health actually has a lot to do with how our bodies react to allergens. After all, as much as 70% of our immune system resides in our guts. This is where our gut microbiota comes into play – the good bacteria not only aid in the process of food digestion, it also plays a crucial role in our body's immune response.

A growing number of studies show increasing links that support this. However, with the widespread use of antibiotics, diets high in fat yet low in fibre, and Caesarean birth that is prevalent in our modern lifestyle, negative changes are occurring in our gut microbiota. New research shows that both the type and mix of microbiota can have a big influence on an infant's developing immune system, and by extension, his risk for developing allergies such as asthma, eczema, hives and food allergy.

What is an allergy?

An allergy is a response triggered by the body's immune system when it reacts to otherwise harmless substances such as dust, pollen, or certain types of foods. The

substances that cause the allergies are known as allergens.

Unfortunately, people with allergies often have to learn to live with it by managing their lifestyle in order to minimise contact with allergens. There is also growing evidence linking gut health with better allergic response, i.e. certain types of bacteria were reported to minimise or even eliminate food allergy symptoms in the lab.

Gut Health Starts from Birth

Studies have shown that infants who suffered from allergic disease or later developed it all had measurable alterations in their intestinal microbiota. It was also found that perinatal administration of beneficial bacteria halved the development of atopic eczema during the first two years of life.

Two key factors that are known to lower the risk of allergy and asthma from developing are breastfeeding and natural birth. The gastrointestinal (GI) system of a foetus is sterile, and both natural childbirth and breastfeeding will help to seed your infant's GI system

with gut microbiota. These bacteria will, in turn, affect the development of his immune system. Another study also showed that breastfed babies had a more diverse gut microbiota than non-breastfed babies and were less likely to have pet allergies.

Keeping Your Guts Healthy

Since your child's guts are responsible for a large part of his body's immune system, it is to your benefit to keep his guts healthy. There are three main things to know in order to keep his gut microbiota in tip-top condition:

Prebiotics – these are essentially food for the good bacteria. Most plant-based foods that are rich in fibre represent excellent sources of prebiotics, such as fruits and vegetables. Examples include apples (with the skin), oranges, banana, onions and garlic, shallots, leeks, beans, legumes, asparagus, and whole grains. For infants who have just started complementary feeding, use a blender to prevent choking hazards.

Probiotics – the good bacteria themselves! By including probiotic-rich foods in your child's diet, you will be ensuring that his gut microbiota is balanced. Recommended foods include miso, natto, kefir, and fermented milk/soy products (e.g. *tempeh*). Probiotics are also available as supplements, however, you should discuss with your child's paediatrician before giving him any.

Beware of medicines – certain medications (especially antibiotics) may cause a condition known as dysbiosis or dysbacteriosis, which basically means that the balance of gut microbiota has been severely compromised. Since more disease-causing bacteria are becoming more antibiotic-resistant, demanding an antibiotic prescription for your child may not be the best answer. However, if it is necessary, then consult with his paediatrician to see how his gut microbiota can be replenished.

Good Habits for Good Gut Health

After ensuring that your child gets enough prebiotics and probiotics, you should also ensure that he maintains certain habits to help ensure good gut health. Leading a healthy lifestyle is certainly the way, and it should include the following:



Make sure he drinks sufficient water daily



Give him a healthy diet that is rich in fibre on a daily basis



Limit his intake of fat, sugar and salt



Allow him to have at least one hour of exercise a day. This can be any kind of physical games that involve some form of aerobic activity such as playing soccer or running.

Finally, always bear in mind that your child's gut health can be harmed by external factors, such as the food he eats. There are even studies reveal how changes in a person's diet caused alterations in their gut microbiota within a day. The saying "You are what you eat" certainly seems to be very apt! **PP**



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Parent's Guide to INFLUENZA

By **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail**, Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist

FLU FACTS

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by the influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic illnesses can get very sick and in some cases, die. Unlike temperate countries, in tropical countries like Malaysia, peak seasons for influenza occurs from Oct-Jan and Apr-June, but there is infection throughout the year.

	Targets	Severity
Type A (avian flu virus)	humans and animals	severe, extremely harmful, epidemic
Type B	humans	common, less severe, occasionally very harmful, non pandemic
Type C	humans	mild, rare, non epidemic

Endemic: When a disease that exists permanently in a particular region or population.

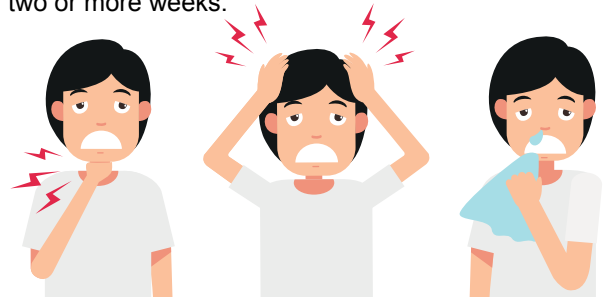
Epidemic: When an outbreak of disease that attacks many people at about the same time and may spread through one or several communities.

Pandemic: When an epidemic spreads throughout the world.

FLU FAQ's

What are the symptoms of flu?

Most people with the flu feel tired and have fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhoea/ vomiting, and sore muscles. Cough can last two or more weeks.



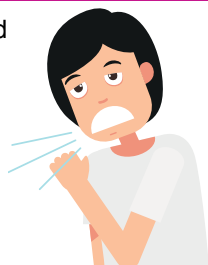
What's the difference between flu & common cold?

The common cold usually causes a runny nose, sneezing and nasal congestion. It is a viral infection of your upper respiratory tract which is usually harmless and can occur at any time of the year.

Influenza also has the same symptoms and affects the upper respiratory tract as well, but onset is rapid and more severe. Viruses that cause flu are different from viruses that cause cold, flu also occurs seasonally.

How does it spread?

Infected children cough, sneeze, and have a runny nose which contains droplets with flu virus in them. Other people can get the flu by inhaling these droplets or getting them in their nose or mouth after touching a surface tainted with respiratory droplets.



If my child has the flu, how long will he/she remain contagious?

About 24 hours after contracting the influenza virus and remain contagious for up to five days after onset of symptoms. Children with compromised immune systems can be contagious for up to two weeks. Infected children can transmit the illness before they even begin to feel any symptoms during the incubation period.

How can I protect & prevent my child from the flu?

The best way to protect your child against the flu is by getting them vaccinated against it as soon as they reach the proper age (≥ 6 months). Children 6 months – 8 years old need 2 doses for the first year they're vaccinated. Make sure to consult a doctor first.

Will the vaccine protect my child from the common cold too?

No, the vaccines only protect against current circulating influenza viruses. Viruses that cause flu and cold differ from each other.

What other medical options do I have other than vaccination?

Antiviral drugs can treat flu in children especially children who are very sick or hospitalised. It can make them feel better, get better sooner and may prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia. However, those need to be prescribed by a doctor.

Never give aspirin or medicine that has aspirin in it to children or teenagers who may have the flu. Antibiotics are also not helpful because they're only effective in treating bacterial infections.

What should I do in case my child gets sick?

Most children with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. Whatever the case, consult your doctor and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks a lot of fluids (plain water).

Are there other ways to prevent flu?

Again, your child's best bet is to get a flu shot. However, certain hygiene habits and practices will also help:

- Stay away from children who are sick
- Clean hands with soap often
- Keep hands away from face
- Cover coughs and sneezes to protect others
- Eat healthily & encourage your child to be physically active.



When should I be worried?

Contact the doctor immediately if your child:

- has a high fever that lasts a long time
- has trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- has bluish skin
- has difficulty taking up fluids
- seems confused or has seizures
- has recurrent symptoms
- has other underlying medical conditions (asthma, thalassemia, diseases being treated with steroids, etc.)



Can my child go to school?

No, avoid spreading the virus, its best if they just stay home and rest. Keep your child home until his or her temperature returns to and stays normal for more than 24 hours. Healthy temperature for children is $37 - 37.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ but may vary from child to child. A fever is defined as having a body temperature of 37.8°C or higher. **PP**

An educational contribution by



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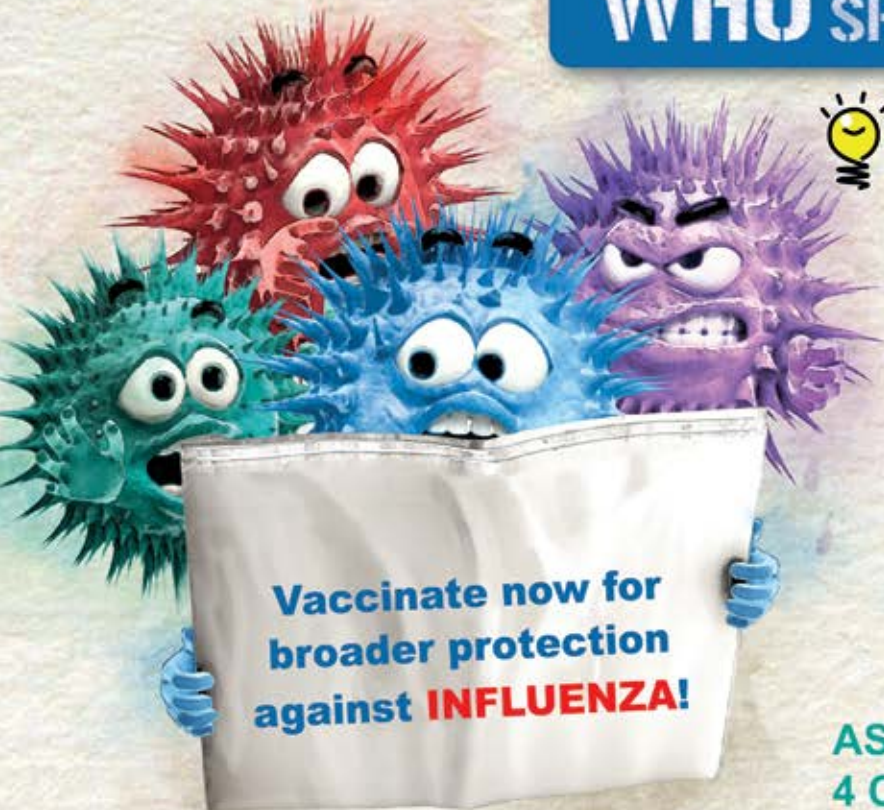


UPGRADE YOUR FLU DEFENCE

INFLUENZA: KNOW THE THREAT

- Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs.¹
- It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.¹
- The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.¹

WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED?



Everyone who is **6 months and older** should get the flu vaccine every year.¹

It is especially important for these **high risk groups** to be vaccinated:¹

- Children below 5 years
- Adults 65 years and above
- Pregnant women
- People with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- People who live with or care for people in high risk groups

**ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT THE
4 COMMON INFLUENZA STRAINS**



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DENGUE



Danger



By **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail**, Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist

Dengue cases nationwide have spiked to alarming levels with 3,337 cases reported in the first week of 2016 alone. That's 1,000 cases more than the average of 2,300 cases per week last year. Overall, 120,836 dengue cases had been reported for 2015, an increase of 11.2% or 12,138 cases compared with 108,698 cases the previous year.

Statistics show that most of the patients are children and young adults, possibly due to their active lifestyle outdoors which increases their exposure to Aedes mosquitoes.

Looking at the statistics, it's hard not to worry about the safety and health of your family – and with good reason. Dengue is no joke, from January 3, 2015 to Jan 6 this year, a total of 336 people have died of dengue.

It Affects Everyone In The Family

Having a family member stricken by dengue can have a disastrous and enduring impact. Affected by high fever, lethargy, and intense pain, the afflicted are unable to leave their homes; going to work or attending school is often out of the question.

Other family members may have to stay at home to care for their sick relative, resulting in an extra loss of income. In households already struggling to make ends meet this represents a considerable burden.

Don't Ignore The Symptoms

Dengue is initially characterised by high fever (40°C) accompanied by at least 2 of the following symptoms:



severe headache



pain behind the eyes



muscle and joint pains



nausea and vomiting*



swollen glands



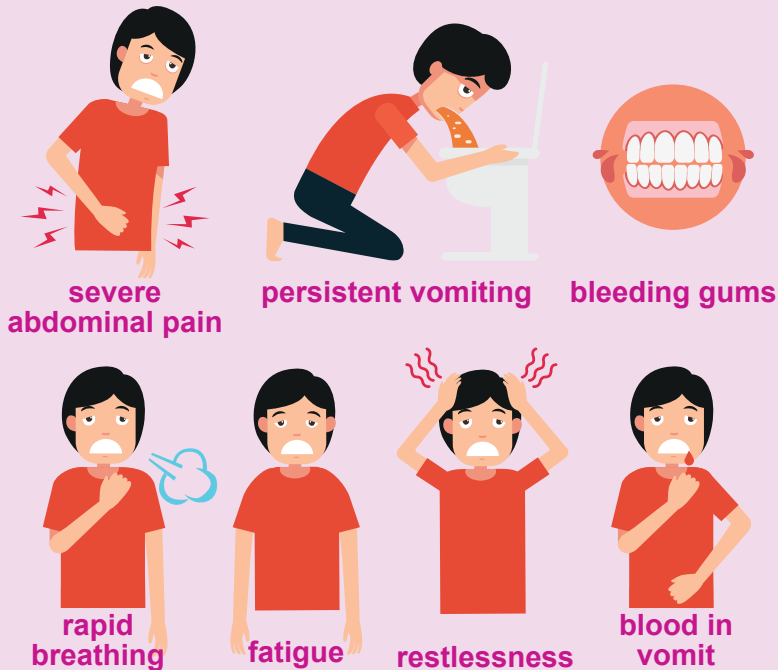
rash – whole arm red with areas of white patches

Symptoms usually last for 2–7 days, after an incubation period of 4–10 days after the bite from an infected mosquito.

*These symptoms may not occur in children.

No Specific Treatment For Severe Dengue!

In some cases, dengue becomes severe and potentially life-threatening. Dengue is usually characterized by high fever, but in cases of severe dengue, a decrease in temperature (below 38°C) may follow and can include other symptoms such as:



There is no specific medicine to treat dengue. Treatment usually involves lots of rest and timely supportive therapy; close monitoring of vital signs and increased oral or intravenous fluid intake to prevent dehydration and shock.

Everyone Is At Risk

No one is truly safe from dengue; not even if you've had dengue fever before – it's a common misconception. There are four distinct, but closely related, serotypes of the virus that cause dengue (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4).

If you recover from any one of these, you are only immune to that particular serotype and are only partially and temporarily protected from the others. Furthermore, if you are infected by other serotypes, your risk of developing severe dengue may increase.

Is There Hope?

Major progress has been made in developing a dengue vaccine which would help reduce the dengue prevalence among the four serotypes with an efficacy of 60.8% according to clinical trials. It has also been shown to reduce the risk of severe dengue by 88.5% and significantly reduce the need for hospitalisation.

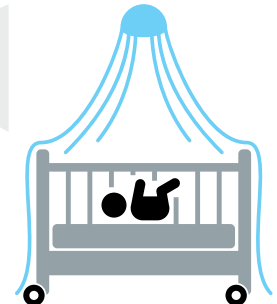
Last December, a dengue vaccine was successfully approved for marketing in Mexico, Brazil and the Philippines. It may be available in Malaysia sometime this year. **PP**

Prevention Is Protection

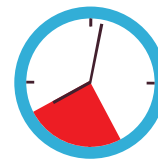
Steps should be taken to reduce risk of being bitten:



Use mosquito coils, repellent or spray



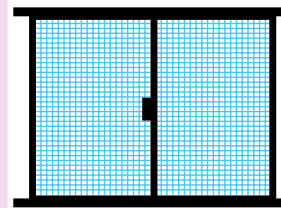
Use bed nets



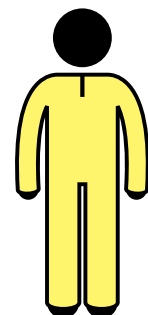
Avoid outdoor activities when mosquitoes are most active (i.e. 5.30-8.30 am and 5.30-8.00 pm)



Destroy mosquito breeding places (e.g. empty or invert open pots, basins or containers which may retain water after rain)



Install mosquito mesh/screen on windows



Wear long sleeved shirts and pants when going outside



Add abate® to standing water to kill mosquito larvae or rear fish in decorative water areas.

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YOU CAN'T SEE ME BUT I CAN SEE YOU-HOO!

I like to play hide-and-seek, just like your kids. I'm behind the curtain, underneath your bed, inside your cupboard; just waiting for the right moment to infect you and your family. I can be anywhere and everywhere. It would be so easy to surprise you with some pain, fever, rashes and gum or nose bleed, like I did to more than 120,000 people last year¹.

So let's share the fun! I'll go hide, but I bet I can find you before you find me!

#MEETMRDENGUE

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Reference:

1. Dengue deaths spike 56.3% in 2015 from year before. Available at <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/01/06/dengue-deaths-spike-56-3-in-2015-from-year-before/>.

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Your Baby's Skin & the Power of Touch

By **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail**, Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist

The sense of touch is one of the most important senses for human beings. Studies have shown that children who receive more warmth and affection from their mothers in the form of physical contact tend to be more resilient to pressure, frustration and distress.

In the womb, the skin is the first sensory organ to develop in the foetus and is the most developed sense at birth. In fact, as early as 6 weeks after conception, when the baby is just 3 cm long, it reacts to the gentle stimulation of its newly formed skin. This happens long before the baby develops eyes and ears. For 9 months before being delivered, the baby is cocooned in the warm secure environment of the mother's womb – it is for this reason that newborns are wrapped tightly in a cloth to re-create that warmth & security.

Understanding the structure and function of the skin will help us appreciate better, the importance of touch. The skin is the largest organ of the body and its functions include (i) protecting the body from irritants, allergens, bacteria & ultraviolet (UV) light, (ii) regulating body temperature, (iii) experience the senses of touch, pain, temperature, (iv) removal of waste products through sweat, and (v) production of vitamin D.



Importance of touch

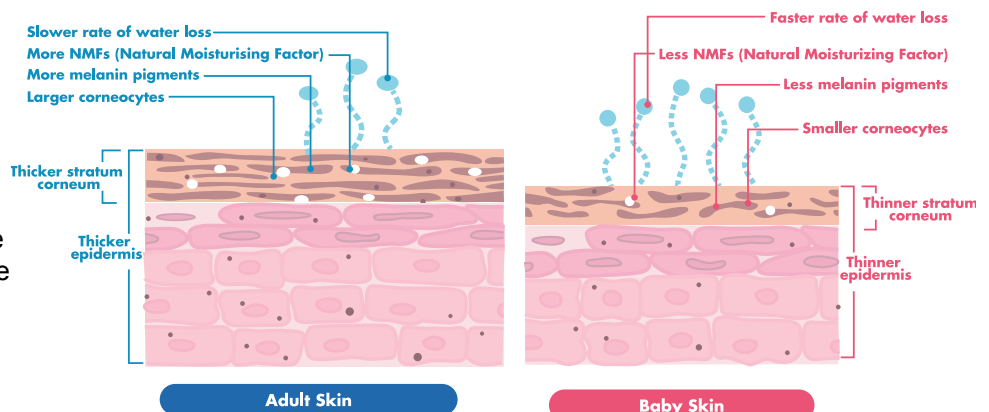
The first 3 years of life are critical for the brain development of babies. The development of the brain depends on the type of stimulation provided to the baby through the senses of touch, hearing, vision and smell. In this article we will focus on the invaluable impact of touch on development of the baby.

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of skin-to-skin contact for development of growing babies. Touch has been found to show benefits such as mother-infant attachment, parental satisfaction, and a better

Did you know?

Your baby's skin is different from adult skin and continues to develop over the first year of life. The baby's skin is 30% thinner compared to adult skin. Besides being less mature, the baby's skin loses water faster, is more vulnerable to the environment and more sensitive to sunlight. The structure of the baby's skin makes it more prone to irritation, infection and allergies compared to adults.

Difference between baby and adult skin



home environment. Mother-infant skin-to-skin contact has also shown to reduce pain in newborns. Touch has also demonstrated to significantly impact breastfeeding, blood sugar levels after birth, and infant crying. In fact even for pre-term babies, touch has been found to have a positive impact – those babies who experienced skin-to-skin contact (“kangaroo care”) while feeding showed significant improvement in their nervous system development.

Stimulating your baby through TOUCH:

As a parent, you may ask: What is the best way to stimulate by baby’s development through touch? Babies simply adore being in close, physical contact with their parents or caregivers – they thrive on affection. In fact, they say that one can never over-do it when it comes to affection showered on babies. A simple method to quickly calm your baby is to cradle him/her in your arms and rock them. Cuddling, caressing, holding and rocking are all important to your baby. Simple loving gestures such as stroking their hair or back as you hold them not only conveys your love and affection, but also soothes, comforts and reassures them. In addition, there are two daily rituals that can serve as excellent opportunities to stimulate the sense of touch in your baby – bathing and massage.

Bathing:

While bathing, the baby enjoys not just the parent or caregiver’s loving touch, but also the warm water and bubbles in the bath tub. When this is combined with singing & talking to the baby (stimulating hearing & language development), making eye contact (stimulating vision) and using a cleanser with a mild fragrance (stimulating smell) – it has a positive impact on the baby’s development.

Massage:

Baby massage is practiced around the world and science has demonstrated its healthy developmental benefits. Through massage, a gentle loving touch can aid in promoting improved social, emotional cognitive and physical development. Massage is known to have both physical and emotional benefits.

The physical benefits include babies gaining weight faster as massage improves digestion and absorption by stimulating the gastrointestinal hormones and also relieving constipation and colics in babies. Another physical benefit is improving the quality and duration of sleep.

The emotional benefits of massage are that these babies are more sociable – infants who are massaged tend to greet people with more eye contact, reaching out, smiling and vocalizing. Massaged infants tend to be happier as touch reduces fussing and crying.

Did you know?

- When massaging your baby, you may use either oil or lotion. This helps in reducing the friction on the baby’s delicate skin during massage and also moisturizes their skin.
- When using oil for massage, select ‘baby oil’ that is formulated to be safe, mild and effective for the baby’s skin. Avoid using cooking oils (olive or mustard oil) as they have a high content of oleic acid that can damage the baby’s fragile skin and lead to skin problems).
- However, massaging without oil or lotion is alright too.

There are plenty of opportunities for you to make touch an integral part of your baby’s life. After all, this is the simplest form of non-verbal communication that conveys affection, security & reassurance. Make touch an integral part of your daily baby rituals like bathing and massage. These special moments during your baby’s growing years will not only impact his emotional, mental and physical development but also forge a strong bond with the family. So the next time you are with your baby - touch more, hold more, hug more. **PP**



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HUMOUR & FAMILY

Its important to have fun together as a family when trying to develop your child's sense of humor. Share jokes, play games, watch funny movies, etc. and have a goofy time together.

Laugh Out Loud Kids!

Encouraging your Child's Sense of Humour

By **Assoc Prof Dr M Swamenathan**, Consultant Psychiatrist

A 'sense of humour', simply put, is the quality of an individual to find certain things funny. It may also involve the ability to tell a joke, appreciate it, or to use humour to mock or to tease. The development of a 'sense of humour' in children is an important part of their growth and development.

Humour is also considered a function of a child's level of cognitive development, it is a very complicated psychological response; subjective, unique and involves various factors. It's no joke! Science believes and has proven that having a sense of humour has its benefits:

- Higher intelligence.
- Promotes creative abilities.
- Improves and enhances social competence.
- High self-esteem.
- Strengthens interpersonal skills
- Better self-control skills, improve emotional and mental wellbeing.
- More resilient to bad/unfavourable experiences (seeing the funny side of things).

Humour Development Stages in Children

In early infancy, baby's first real laugh-out-loud usually comes around the age of 3-4 months. Pleasurable sensations, such as making fart noises on the child's tummy, or surprising them at a game of peek-a-boo can elicit laughs over and over again. This is an early form of humour; however, a sense of humour develops and becomes more complex within these 4 stages:

Stage 1 [18 to 24 months]: children are amused when an object used for a familiar function is used in another entirely different and absurd way than it was meant to (i.e. wearing socks on ears).

Stage 2 [2 to 3 years]: Verbal jokes start to make sense (or nonsense). The simplest of jokes like calling mother as "daddy" represents a higher level of cognitive function – this requires a bit more abstract thought. The child no longer needs physical props to make or get jokes.

Stage 3 [3 to 5 years]: The child requires a bit more twist for a humorous effect because of the child's

increased knowledge of the world. At this stage children are often amused by an absurd visual, something out of place like adding fake wings on a dog or rabbit ears on a cat. It's humorous not so much because it is illogical, but because it just looks funny.

Stage 4 [6 and onwards]: At this stage, the child's sense of humour will resemble the humour of adults. It is characterised by the child's ability to understand the double meanings that words and sentences can have sometimes (e.g. "What do you call a bear with no socks on? Bare-foot!"). Understanding of irony starts from 5-6 years-old while sarcasm can be grasped at about 8-9.

Nevertheless, it is still possible for a child at an older stage to appreciate and laugh at jokes meant for younger children. A sense of humour is not limited by range, but increases and expands to appreciate a broader field of types of humour. In fact, as adults, some of us still enjoy a good fart joke or slapstick every now and then.

What Makes Our Kids LOL?

Every child has a different preference on what they consider as 'funny'. Enhanced cognitive abilities, better understanding of the world as well as past experiences help mould their sense of humour. Some of the categories of humour enjoyed by children (in some cases even adults) include:

Category	Example
■ Absurdity	Spongebob blowing his thumb so big it explodes - ridiculous!
■ Defiance	sneakily writing "don't write on the blackboard" on the blackboard despite being told not to
■ Exaggeration	loud voluntary burping for no reason
■ Human predicaments	looking cool at first only to clumsily tumble down a flight of stairs
■ Incongruity	using a slipper as a phone
■ Verbal humour	jokes, puns, etc.
■ Mockery and ridicule	
■ Slapstick	

Humour can be Developed, Taught and Learned

Parents have the most influence over their child's personality. When a child's development of humour is encouraged – as in praised and appreciated – it will blossom. Here are some ways you can develop your child's sense of humour:

1. Read funny books to them using funny, made-up language, voices and sounds – toddlers will enjoy this one. Older children may enjoy comics, cartoons or funny movies instead.
2. Life experiences are also a significant factor. When failure, sadness or a bad experience comes up, use the opportunity to help them turn a negative situation into something positive.
3. Jokes on you! Laughing at your antics can be as stimulating and encouraging as laughing with you. It shows that humour is accepted and it's fine to be silly and laugh at yourself sometimes.
4. A supportive environment at home fosters confidence which helps children be more willing to accept and make humorous attempts.
5. Help your child see beyond the surface of things and encourage thinking outside the box.
6. Enjoy and participate in the playful aspects of your child's life. Role playing, for example (i.e. acting like a superhero or just pretending to be a police officer) is a good way to get you involved with your child. It's about exploration and imagination, stimulating creativity, a crucial part of humour.

The most important thing when trying to encourage humour is not to steer your child's sense of humour in a particular direction, let them build their own preferences to humour. Your duty is to provide guidance about humour that's not hurtful and establishing limits so that your children don't take it too far. If hurtful or inappropriate humour is used, don't laugh. Take time to explain why that is not funny and help your child redirect his/her behaviour. **PP**

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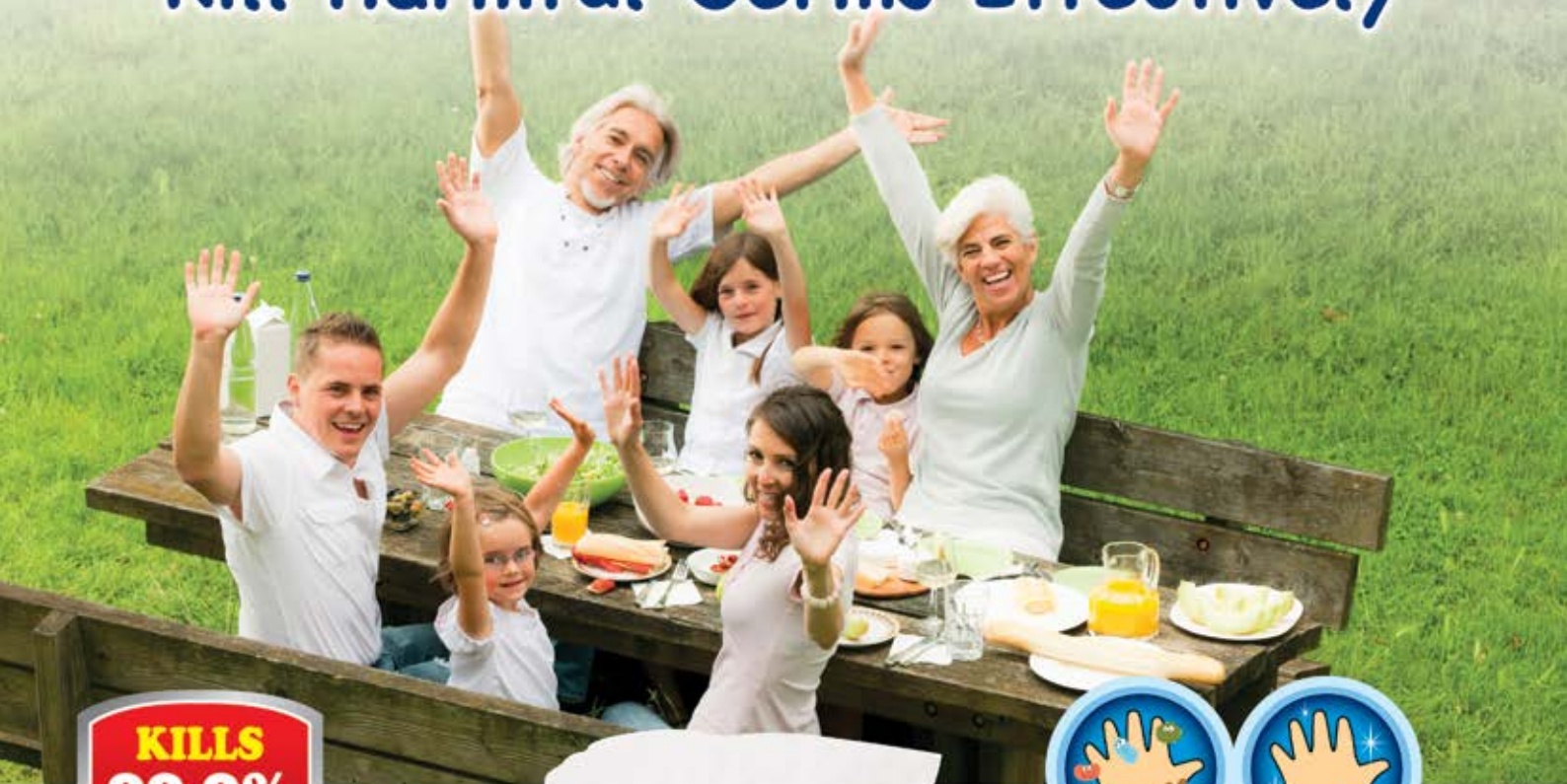


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Begin Mindfulness from Young

By **Associate Professor Dr Alvin Ng Lai Oon**, Clinical Psychologist

There is every reason to focus on practising good lifestyle habits. Of course, there is more to good health than just eating right and exercising. While all these are necessary for maintaining good health, let's not neglect the importance of mental health as well.

After all, life in this modern age is fast-paced and often leaves you with next to no time for yourself, thus leading to negative thoughts or feelings. Listening to relaxing music may help or even going for a run in the park to sweat it out. However, these are all things that you do after feeling negative.

How can you prevent it in the first place? You can actually improve your mental wellbeing and reduce the negative thoughts or feelings. In fact, there is a growing movement to embrace mindfulness to achieve this. Mindfulness itself is not new, having been around for a very long time. The best part is that it is not necessary for you to be religious or spiritual in order to enjoy its benefits. Western healthcare has even come up with therapies that utilise it, such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

What is mindfulness?

Despite the exotic-sounding name, the bare-bones concept behind mindfulness is simple – it is all about being consciously aware of the present moment and experiencing it without making any judgements. As you hone this skill, you will find that it is a very helpful tool for dealing with stress and anxiety, both for children and adults. A simple way to help your child to understand the concept of mindfulness is this very apt quote:

“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why it’s called the present.”

Still don't believe that mindfulness is useful? Think about the last meal you had. Can you recall anything about it? Was it just a meal to alleviate your hunger or did you enjoy it? Sadly, too many people are so busy multi-tasking that most meals are consumed in 'autopilot'-mode, i.e. place food in mouth, chew, swallow, and repeat.

By being mindful of your meal, we would take notice of each and every component, i.e. the smell of the food, how it looks, what it tastes like, the sensation as we eat it, etc. Eating should be done with the intention of caring for one's self and it should be done with the necessary attention, so as to notice and enjoy one's meal and how it affects your body.

Mindfulness vs Meditation

There are many similarities between the two. It could even be said that mindfulness is a fundamental skill required prior to practising meditation. However, the simplest and most readily apparent difference between the two is in the approach, i.e. mindfulness is something that can be done at any time or place whereas meditation requires you to practice it for specific amounts of time.

Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a mental tool that helps you gain greater self-awareness of your thoughts, behaviour and feelings. The ultimate goal is to enable you to better manage them rather than allowing them to overwhelm you. It benefits you by improving your:

- **overall wellbeing** – helps you focus better on the present and be less preoccupied with too many thoughts or worries.
- **physical health** – helps relieve stress, treat heart disease, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve sleep, alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties
- **mental health** – mindfulness meditation has been shown to produce positive results in treating depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

So before you start your child off on the pathway to mindfulness, it is a good idea for you to practice it yourself. It will be easier for you to guide your child along as he can emulate you as you practise mindfulness together. There are even apps that you can download to help guide you on your journey into mindfulness, such as “Stop, Breathe, and Think”, “Calm.com”, “Insight Timer”, and “MindShift”, to name a few. However, just like any journey, there will be ups and downs, so above all, be patient in your attempts to impart mindfulness to him and persevere. The whole exercise in mindfulness is to learn to be satisfied with the present. So it is very important to be kind and gentle in your approach.

Mindfulness Can Help Your Child

Just as it benefits you, mindfulness will also benefit your child. Most of the time, a child’s mind is often easily distracted, or it may be consumed by thoughts of yesterday or worries of the morrow. All too often, he will simply be running on autopilot as he goes through his day, or simply “going through the motions”.

By teaching your child to be mindful, he learns how to switch his attention from his thoughts or emotions to the sensory perceptions of what’s happening around him. By consciously doing so, it allows him to be more aware of his emotional reactions, making it easier for him to be calmer and less prone to emotional outbursts. Furthermore, there is a higher likelihood of being grateful and satisfied when one is more aware of current situations where there are many things to be grateful for. How often do we notice that we are good enough and that things are also good enough? As mentioned earlier, mindfulness practice breeds the feelings of satisfaction, which is increasingly rare in our competitive world.

Other long-term benefits of mindfulness include:

- improving his memory (by improving his ability to pay attention)
- enhancing his ability to focus on the moment, thus improving his learn skills
- allowing him to better understand his thought process and how his mind works, which ultimately leads to greater self-understanding.
- learning to be satisfied with the present – “now is good enough, I am good enough”

However, do note that these outcomes are only possible through the regular practice of mindfulness – even adults face difficulties in achieving this.

Different stages for different ages

It’s very important that your child learns from the experiences that he is going through. Mindfulness practice is a gentle experiential learning method that cannot be learnt by reading or being told. So it is very helpful if you, as a parent or teacher learn how it feels like first, and how it helps.

When you first introduce mindfulness to your child, keep it as simple and as informal as possible. All that is really needed is to focus your attention on the present moment and to be in tune with what is happening both around and to you.

For children who are too young to express to you how they feel or what they experience, you may demonstrate from a story to illustrate how a person can benefit from mindfulness. You may use a model of your child’s favourite character or hero as an example so that he can be inspired by the story. Then run through the actual exercises with him.

For example, you can use the Incredible Hulk as an unmindful character who rages on when he is not in tune with his anger. Once he is calm and in tune with what is upsetting him, he can then manage his problems in a much more adaptive manner, rather than destructive.

Up to 6 years	To begin with, if your child is up to six years of age, the use of sensations is ideal as the first step to learning mindfulness. A simple exercise is to get your child to describe what his hands feel when he touches things or the taste and sensation of the food he eats. Turn it into a game by giving him a pop-quiz at random times, by asking him to stop what he is doing and to describe what he sees, hears, or feels, e.g. the colours he is using with his colouring book, the feel of the colour pencil in his hand, the way the wind from a fan blows through his hair, etc.
7-12 years	If your child is between seven to twelve years old, you can start with the previous method for younger children but with the addition of focusing his attention to more specific signals. This applies not just to his physical body but also to his feelings and emotions, such as anger, frustration, etc.
Tweens/teens	Most tween/teens can better understand and share their perceptions. You can start off by sharing the benefits of mindfulness with your child. A child who is more attuned to his perceptions or feelings may even be able to pinpoint the origin of why he reacts in a particular way to certain situations or stimulus.

It is very important that for all the above examples, you need to get feedback from your child on how they feel. If they feel good, remind them to be aware of those good feelings and where they come from. This helps them see the link between mindfulness exercises and feeling pleasant. If they do not make this connection, the exercises will not mean anything to them. **PP**

My Positive Teen

- Socio-emotional
- Conditions and Diseases

Inspire Your Child's Career Choices

By **Dr Anjali Doshi-Gandhi, Deputy Director General (Policy)**,
National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN)

As a parent you have a key role to play in supporting your children with their career journey. Your kids will look to you for advice and guidance. Therefore, it's important that you have as much of the career development information at hand. Find out what your roles are and how you can help your child discover the endless career possibilities the world has to offer.

What is a Career?

"Career" is the progress and actions taken by a person throughout their lifetime, especially those related to that person's occupations. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time.

Traditionally this meant employees staying with one job during their whole career. Today however, there is an increasing trend for employees to change jobs more frequently but still within a particular field (i.e. a lawyer could work for several different firms and in several different areas of law over a lifetime), or in an altogether different field.

Discovering The World

As parents, we need to consciously expose our children to career possibilities that lie in and out of our own experience. Some things you can do are:

- 1 Encourage your child to have proactive discussions with family members who have different career backgrounds. It's an opportunity for them to ask questions about a certain career choice and how to achieve it. Start with your own career first!
- 2 Taking family field trips to workplaces, and other businesses can give children an idea of what a job looks like. For young adults and teenagers, job fairs are a good place to go to gather more information about a particular career or learning about a new one.
- 3 Joining career clubs at their school or non-governmental organizations can help connect children to career-focused field trips, guest speakers, and volunteer activities that build job skills.

4 Role-play activities can help spur your child's interest. You can do this at home with the family using props – it's also a great way to spend some quality time together. Similarly, you can go to certain family entertainment centres which provide career edutainment activities that are both engaging and interactive.



Your Attitude Matters

Parents also influence the knowledge children have about work and different occupations; the beliefs and attitudes they have to working; and the motivation they have to succeed. Most of this is learned unconsciously – children and teenagers absorb their parent's attitudes and expectations of them as they grow up.

Therefore you should:

- set realistic expectations based on a child's strengths. This is key to building the kind of confidence that is essential to long-term success.
- set a good example (i.e. good work ethics, exemplary behaviour).
- provide sufficient opportunities for your children to learn and develop their interests by noticing their personality and strength.
- have a trusting, affectionate and supportive parent-child relationship.
- keep the lines of communication open.

Avoid:

- over-involvement and making all their decisions for them.
- downplaying their choices or be condescending about them.
- over-thinking things, it causes stress and tension.
- forcing them into careers/choices they don't like.

Having a positive attitude towards the choices your child makes and understanding that choosing a career is a journey (unpredictable and constantly evolving) are some of the ways in which you can support your child to prepare for their future and make them more adaptable to change.

Career Profiling

To help you have an idea of what your child's career may be, have them take a career profiling/ aptitude/ personality/ assessment test, you can do this online. The test is scientifically-based and is backed by comprehensive studies; it includes a series of questions that are designed to assess your child's interests, values, and preferences.

It provides an interesting look at your child's personality and details information about what motivates and interests them. In addition, it will provide suggestions of particular careers that are best-suited for your child. From there, parents can help "groom" their child to become whatever it is they aspire to be.

Enhance Their Skills

Young people need the skills (job as well as life skills), knowledge and capabilities to navigate through these various experiences. They will also need to use resilience in order to move forward when their preferred career option does not follow a direct pathway. The important thing is that you help them develop the skills they need so that it aligns with a particular career.

Different experiences throughout life; involvement in new and challenging activities (formal and informal education); as well as engaging with a network of new people every now and then, help your child develop these skills.

Generally, skills include but are not limited to:

- Human-relationship
- Behavioural
- Communication
- Computer literacy
- Conflict resolution
- Information management
- Language
- Leadership
- Decision-making
- Money management
- Problem-solving
- Vocational
- Emotional Quotient

Your child's interest may change as they grow up and you should always be there to encourage them to pursue that path. If their initial interest changes don't be disappointed, nourish that enthusiasm too.

Parents should avoid reacting negatively towards career choices of their children; it may shut down the whole exploration process. The "road less travelled" can be as fulfilling and promising as any other normal career options. Therefore, parents need to be supportive and encourage their child to gather as much information as possible on their career interests.

Lastly, a parent must recognize that their role is to act as a facilitator in their child's career journey and allow independent career choices to be made. A career is something which is unique to every one of us and everybody should be supported to follow their interests. What is important is for you to help them be aware of as many satisfying career choices as possible. **PP**

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Key activities of PP

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