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Helping Your Child Develop

There are ups and downs in your experience as parents, and despite the challenges, watching your child grow is a special type of joy. All parents want to see their babies grow into healthy and fine adults. However, only observing is not enough. As parents you have to get involved and be attentive to your child's development.

It is essential for you to be familiar with your child's developmental milestones, to ensure he develops and grows healthily. We address some contemporary issues related to this and share some suggestions on how to tackle those issues. We also share relevant signs that you should be aware of, as these signal trouble in your child's development. Then, you can take the appropriate steps to address them.

There are also some insights from trusted experts that focus on how to manage high blood pressure in pregnancy, how to do elimination diet, some advice on nurturing emotional intelligence in your child, information on fire safety, and some tips on developing social skills in youth.

To conclude, let's aspire to be successful parents to our children. We hope that your child will grow and prosper to become a healthy and active adult. Hopefully, this issue will be helpful in your journey as a parent and you will enjoy reading it. All our current and previous articles and issues can be accessed from our website at www.mypositiveparenting.org.



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Optimising Child Development

The Parental Role

Developmental Milestones are specific markers used to measure a child's growth in four primary areas of development, namely speech/language, cognitive/intellectual, social/emotional, and fine/gross motor development. These are further divided according to the child's age range, e.g. 0-5 months, 5-8 months, and so on. They give parents, caregivers, and paediatricians a yardstick to measure whether a child is "on target" in their development compared to other children of the same age.

Start Early

As your child's social and emotional development has its roots in your relationship, it is critical to establish a healthy parent-child bond as early as possible. Bear in mind that these bonds also set the stage in developing his emotional well-being and social relationships in later life.

Starting from infancy, you should be open, responsive, and sensitive to your child in order to encourage higher levels of trust and attachment. In turn, this helps create a strong parent-infant bond that would lead to a more independent child who is able to express himself.



Parental Involvement Required

Parents and families are the first ‘teachers’ in a child’s life. While the parental role is filled with many challenges, you can create stability in your child’s life by establishing routines.

These include things such as taking meals together, giving baby a massage before naps/bedtime, or fixed bed-times.



Dr Raja Juanita
Consultant Developmental
and General Paediatrician

Bonding with your baby leads to a powerful, lasting connection. This is important as it provides your baby with his first experience of an intimate relationship, thus building security and positive self-esteem.

This initial bond can impact his social and cognitive development at a later age. As parents, you will need to commit to spending both time and energy with him. That being said, as long as either parent can bond with your baby, he will have the closeness and support to promote healthy growth and development. Make eye contact and facial expressions such as smiling and nodding. Respond to baby’s cooing with simple replies such as “You’re talking!” and singing to encourage communication. Physical affection such as cuddling, gentle touching and holding makes baby feel loved, safe and secure.

However, in the event that you are having trouble bonding with your baby, do discuss any concerns you may have with his paediatrician. It may be due to postpartum depression, exhaustion, or feeling overwhelmed. Regardless of the reason, quickly identify the problem and resolve it fast.



Spending time with your child is an important aspect that helps form strong emotional attachments. Both quality and quantity of time are important; think of them as both sides of a coin. Here are some simple tips for busy parents of young children:

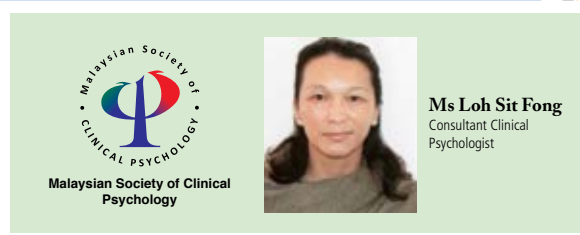
- **Pick one day** of the week for family time. Put aside your work and get the whole family to join in for some fun; it could be a board game, movie night, outing to a local park, or whatever your kids love.
- **Little helpers** – once your child is old enough, get him to help out with whatever household chores you



An essential part of growing up, play is an excellent way to bond with your child. It helps him to develop his social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills by engaging in it. Playing with others also helps him become more resilient by learning how to work or negotiate with others and to overcome challenges. Ultimately, playing helps expand his creativity.

As parents, play is a perfect chance for you to be completely involved with him and a means to strengthen the parent-child bond. Observe him as he plays, or better yet, join in the fun! Viewing the world through his eyes allows you to better communicate with him.

Pay close attention as your child may find it easier to express his emotions through play. Best of all, by immersing yourself in his world, you show him that you care and that he has your full attention.



are doing. The focus here is on working together as a team, not on getting the work done fast.

- Have as **many family meals** together as humanly possible! Nothing sets the tone for family togetherness better than having a good chow down with the whole family. It doesn't have to be restricted to dinnertime; mix things up a little and have high tea instead on lazy Saturday or Sunday afternoons. There should also be a ban on the use of digital gadgets during family meals!

Encouraging Independence

As your child grows, he will start showing some signs of independence. While parental involvement is a necessary component, you must learn to balance your desire to parent against his need to exert himself. This is one of the biggest parenting challenges; knowing when to step in and when to let him figure things out.

An analogy to illustrate the importance of this principle is the story of the struggling butterfly that is slowly emerging from its cocoon. Helping it out of its cocoon leads to a butterfly with malformed wings – it is during the butterfly's struggle to emerge from its cocoon that fluids are forced into its wings, causing them to stretch and open them. This classic story illustrates the importance of taking a step back and allowing children the opportunity to learn through their own experiences.

**Dr Raja Juanita
says...**

There is such a thing as too much parenting. The results of over-parenting can be seen in some of today's youths. Children who are over-parented grow up with less resilience and a sense of entitlement. They may not be able to cope with difficulties, poor sense of responsibility, and may suffer from high anxiety. Actions that may indicate over-parenting include:

- 'babying' an older child (carrying him instead of letting him walk, cutting his food for him, etc.)
- placing many restrictions, especially an older child (e.g. not allowing him to get his driver's licence as 'driving is too dangerous')
- not allowing children to face the consequence of their actions (e.g. parents may blame others even if their child is wrong)
- overprotective parents who demand that teachers give the child concessions (e.g. for not doing homework or school project) despite no rational reason for not completing it
- insisting on being involved in their child's social circle (e.g. the 'best friend parent' instead of 'parent')
- leaving the child with no 'alone' time, i.e. the child has little to no privacy
- micromanaging the child's activities and taking over responsibilities
- telling the child what to do instead of guiding him

These are just some of the examples! At the end of the day, your role as a parent is to prepare your child to face the world on his own. While you should certainly provide him with shelter and security, this should not be done at the expense of his ability to function as an adult in future.

”

The term “helicopter parenting” is used to describe over-protective parents who practically hover over their child.

This can be counter-productive in the long term. While parents certainly do need to keep a close eye on infants and toddlers, this may spiral out of control and turn into over-protectiveness.



As parents, you should remember that your strength is the result of your own childhood struggles. Parenting success is not about how much you do for your child, it is about how well you can teach him to act on his own. Shielding your child from the harsh realities of life may seem like a good idea, but in actual fact, you are depriving him of lessons in problem-solving.

It is perfectly alright for your child to feel anxious, be concerned, or even go through the disappointment of not getting what he worked for. Life is filled with ups and downs, and learning to face and deal with the uncertainties when he is down is actually a vital skill!

Here's some tips to prevent helicopter parenting:

- **Stop and take stock:** before you charge in to rescue your child from every single demanding situation, take a quick analysis first. Provided his life is not in immediate danger or he is not about to hurt himself or others, allow him to explore things on his own. Resist the urge to 'save' him every time.
- **You are his parent, not his best friend:** as your child grows, so does his need for privacy and his own social circle. Avoid infringing on his personal space excessively. While worries about cyber bullying or predators on the internet are valid, it is by far more important to empower your child to do something about it.
- **Disguised learning opportunities:** mistakes help him grow so instead of 'saving' him, encourage him to keep trying to solve them on his own. This helps build his resilience and perseverance; rushing to his rescue denies him the opportunity to develop these critical life skills, which will prove detrimental once he is an adult.



Ms Loh Sit Fong says...

Little or limited parental involvement can lead to problems with self-esteem or self-confidence later in life. Strangely enough, over-involved parents can also cause this dilemma. Although the root cause in both instances is different, the end results are the same.

It's important that as parents, you are there for your child when he needs your support, be it emotional, financial, or support in any other form or manner. You should also be comfortable to take a step back and allow him to make his own decisions and face his own struggles, failures and successes. It is this balance that plays a pivotal role in allowing your child to discover his own self and inner strength, thus allowing him to develop his own self-confidence and self-esteem.

Ultimately, he has to learn how to deal with the world on his own. As he grows and matures, your role will gradually change from protector to advisor.

Helicopter parenting can be a problem as it can hinder his future development as he grows.

To get him ready to be independent, it is vital that you coach him in preparation rather than buzz overhead. Put him in charge of specific household chores such as clearing the dishes or feeding a pet. Giving him a chance to take ownership of certain 'jobs' helps build up his confidence and self-esteem.

The harsh reality of life is that as parents, there will come a time when your child will need to stand on his own. Thus, it behoves us as parents, to raise an independent and responsible adult who is able to make mature and rational life-decisions. Part of loving your child is knowing when to let go, so focus on empowering him in preparation for adult life. **PP**

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Child Development

- Skills
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Of Parenting & Consequences

By **Ms Yang Wai Wai**, Clinical Psychologist

As parents, there are various strategies of parenting that can be practised to teach your kids how to behave, and all parents have their own set of rules. One common and effective parenting tool that is often used is consequences. The simplest response from you after a particular behaviour by your kids can be regarded as a consequence. Experiencing consequences can help your kids to learn from their mistakes, make better decisions, and improve their behaviour.



Consequences are rational responses to your kids' behaviour and done to convey that their behaviour is their choice and responsibility. There are positive and negative consequences. **Positive consequences**, such as attention, tell your kids that you like the behaviour and can foster the behaviour in your kids. Inversely, **negative consequences**, such as ignoring, show that you do not like the behaviour and can prevent them from repeating it. You can praise your kids after they followed your instruction to put their toys in place after playtime, and you can keep their toys away from them if they did not. Punishments, on the other hand, are different from negative consequences. Punishments are usually imposed on your kids out of your emotion, and communicate that their action and decision are controlled by you.



Tips for Effective Consequences

Be calm and rational: Take a pause and calm down so that you can think clearly and focus on your kids' behaviour, and not your emotion. Reflect on what you want them to learn before handing out the consequences. Be rational and avoid nagging or cajoling when giving consequences.

3R (Related, Respectful, Reasonable):

An effective consequence should be logically related to the behaviour and not randomly given. It should also be respectful to the kids and does not humiliate them. Consequences should also be reasonable, which means suitable to their age and ability, and proportionate with the behaviour.

Be clear and brief: Give brief and clear instruction to your kids when giving them consequences. This can help them understand your intention and prevent you from getting into unnecessary negotiation or argument that can undo the lesson.

Task- and time-specific: Task-specific consequence means that your kids should be actively doing a specific task, instead of passively waiting for the consequence to finish. Consequences should also be time-specific so that the period is long enough to make your kids work for it, but not too long that both kids and parents lose interest. Consequences should also be immediate so that your kids can connect their behaviour to the following consequence.

Be consistent and steadfast: You should be consistent with the consequences that you have decided for present and future behaviour. Be steadfast with your decision and do not give in to any resistance or lack of change in behaviour.

Be prepared: Come up with a list of consequences for possible future behaviour so that you can be prepared when it happens. You can also prepare lists for specific occasions such as when taking a flight or going on a trip to the beach.

By experiencing consequences, kids learn to think about what they did and how they can make amends. In the long run, it teaches them their actions have consequences and lays the groundwork that is an absolute necessity for them to make it in 'the real world' when they are adults. **PP**

Types of Consequences


Natural consequences: These are the effect of an action or decision that is bound to happen by nature or reason, with or without your intervention, which can be effective if it is not damaging to the kids or others. For example, Sara loses her doll because she was careless during an outing, or she feels hungry because she refused to eat. However, if she plays with a knife, her parents should definitely step in to prevent injury.

Logical consequences: Most of the time, it is not suitable to let natural consequences take place, because they are not effective. In these cases, parents should get involved and carry out logical (common-sense) consequences that are related to the kids' behaviour. For example, when they argue about TV channels, you can turn it off or cut their viewing session short. Or, if they made a mess then they must clean it up.

Imposed consequences: Sometimes, you might not be able to find a logical consequence to the kids' behaviour, it might no longer be effective, or multiple mistakes might have been committed. Hence, you can impose other unrelated consequences such as by suspending some, or all, of their privileges. These are usually best communicated beforehand to your kids to give them an opportunity to stop and think about their behaviours. However, it is important for parents and kids to differentiate between parental obligations and privileges for effective consequences.

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Nurturing Emotional Intelligence in Your Child

By Mr Alexius Cheang, Behavioural Psychologist

You may have heard of IQ (intelligence quotient), but children who have developed their EQ (emotional quotient), have been found to be physically healthier, do better in school and get along better with friends. EQ is the ability to identify, understand, and regulate one's own emotions and the emotion of others.

IQ vs EQ

It is a common misconception that either IQ or EQ are more significant than the other in predicting success in life. IQ and EQ are only different in terms of what they measure. IQ measures your cognitive intelligence – problem-solving skills, pattern recognition, reasoning, logic, mathematics – and how good you are at processing information. Alternatively, EQ measures your emotional intelligence and how good you are at processing emotional information to guide your decision and action. As an analogy, your IQ can predict your career path or field, while your EQ can determine how well you perform at the position and how well you cooperate with your colleagues.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman, found that EQ consisted of five components:

- **Self-awareness:** the ability to recognise our own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals.
- **Self-regulation:** the ability to control our own emotions in reacting to circumstances.
- **Internal motivation:** the drive to achieve or accomplish our own goals in life.
- **Empathy:** the ability to understand and consider others' emotions.
- **Social skills:** the ability to build and manage relationship.

He estimated that IQ makes up at best only 20 percent of the factors that determine life success. The rest, such as EQ, wealth, temperament, family education levels and pure luck make up the balance.

Another psychologist, John Gottman, observed how parents responded to their children's emotions in an effort to understand how EQ develops and found that parents generally responded to their children's emotions in one of four possible ways: (Excerpt from <https://www.gottman.com/blog/strengthen-childs-emotional-intelligence/>)

1. **Dismissing parents** saw children's emotions as unimportant and attempted to eliminate them quickly, often through the use of distraction.
2. **Disapproving parents** saw negative emotions as something to be squashed, usually through punishment.
3. **Laissez-faire parents** accepted all emotions from children, but failed to help the child solve problems or put limits on inappropriate behaviours.
4. **Emotion coaching parents** valued both positive and negative emotions, were not impatient with a child's expression of them, and used emotional experience as an opportunity for bonding by offering guidance through appropriately labelling emotions and problem-solving the issue(s) at hand.

Nurturing a Child's EQ

Based on his observations of parents interacting with their children, Gottman recommended the following five steps to nurturing and improving a child's EQ.

Step 1: Being aware of your child's emotions

Parents who emotion coach are aware of their own feelings and are also sensitive to the emotions that are present in their children. They don't wait for their child to escalate their behaviour or act out their emotional expression for their feelings to be acknowledged.

Step 2: See emotions as an opportunity for connection and teaching

Children's emotions are not an inconvenience or a challenge. They are an opportunity to connect with your child and coach them through a challenging feeling.

Step 3: Listen and validate the feelings

Give your child your full attention while you listen to their emotional expression. Reflect back what you hear, thus telling your child you understand what they're seeing and experiencing.

Step 4: Label their emotions

After you have fully listened, help your child

develop an awareness of and vocabulary for their emotional expression.

Step 5: Help your child problem-solve with limits

All emotions are acceptable—but all behaviours are not. Help your child cope with his or her emotions by developing problem-solving skills. Limit the expression to appropriate behaviours. This involves helping your child set goals and generating solutions to reach those goals.

Although the time taken to complete these steps can be initially significant, Gottman found that emotion coaching parents followed all five steps only 20-25 percent of the time, thereby suggesting there is no need for guilt as no parent can complete this process all the time.

Why is EQ important?

Study after study has proven EQ's importance that emotional intelligence predicts future success in relationships, health and quality of life. It's been shown that children with high EQs earn better grades, stay in school longer and make healthier choices overall. Teachers also report that high EQ students are more co-operative and make better leaders in the classroom. In addition, having a high emotional intelligence is a greater predictor of career success than having a high IQ, which means it's valued by employers looking for candidates who can complete work and get along with people in progressively collaborative workplaces. (Excerpt from <https://www.todayparent.com/kids/kids-health/eq-vs-iq-why-emotional-intelligence-will-take-kids-farther-in-life/>)

EQ is a set of essential skills in life and provides us with a more comprehensive way of information processing. Only enhancing our IQ is not enough for a successful life. Kids with high EQ are more socially effective and have more successful relationships at home and at school. They are more productive and have better attention. Furthermore, people with high EQ are good at leading and managing their associates. They are also less prone to anxiety and depression. High EQ leads to good mental health and social behaviour, and these are important keys to a good life and career. As parents, we should put the same importance on nurturing both IQ and EQ in our kids, as both are complementary abilities that work together for our kids' development and success as human beings. **PP**

Fostering Your Toddler's Growth Through Creativity & Play

By **Dr Rajini Sarvananthan**, Consultant Developmental Paediatrician



As a parent, you will find that you are your toddler's favourite playmate. Every second you spend with him during playtime is special. Best of all, it is not only something that is fun that you will cherish in your memories forever, it is also a critical part of his growth and development.

Playtime is serious business for toddlers as it is the main way that he learns about the world around him while levelling up his physical development, powering up his imagination and creativity (both of which are vital in the learning process), and getting started on social skills.

Fostering creativity

Think of creativity as a way for your toddler to express himself. Allowing him the freedom for creative self-expression can reflect and nurture his emotional health. The experiences that he has during the first few years of life can affect how his creativity develops.

Thus, it is critical that you provide him with ample opportunities to explore, experience, and express himself. Creative play involves imagination and creative thinking. Draw and paint together, explore the outdoors, listen to music (try several genres to see which ones he likes), and let him make his own art using materials such as paper, clay, or building blocks.

By allowing your toddler to have a variety of experiences, you are effectively stimulating his sensory

systems, building on imagination and providing him with a broader range of ideas. Remember, it is not just places and materials but also personal experiences with different people that help your toddler thrive and develop socially and physically.

Remember to emphasise the process of creativity, and not the final product. You can do this by appreciating and encouraging his efforts while allowing him the independence to handle it on his own. For example, if he paints the sun blue and colours the leaves of a tree pink, just go with the flow – while colour does serve as an indicator of his emotions, you may be surprised to learn that he has his own special way of interpreting his paintings!

Power of colours

Colours can impact your child's mood or behaviour, thus it is important to paint your rooms with the right colours. In general, children tend to associate happy scenes with bright colours such as orange, yellow, green and blue, whereas sad scenes are associated with dark colours such as brown, black, and grey.



Creative play

This usually involves using his creativity to turn everyday objects into something that he can play with. Playtime with your toddler can be accomplished with almost anything at hand, e.g. a large cushion placed on a carpet can be his 'safe island in the ocean' while you pretend to be a shark that is circling the island waiting to pounce on him when he tries to leave.

By spending plenty of quality time with him, you help to reinforce his creative spirit while engaging in spontaneous play with him. While you may initiate some of the creative play, be sure to give him the chance to come up with his own creative ideas or suggestions.

Encouraging creativity

You can help stimulate his creativity with some ingenuity of your own. Here are some tips & ideas you can make use of:

- **Create a drawing or painting area.** You can even reserve one section of his play room for him to doodle, draw, or paint on if you want. You can minimise potential messes by covering floors or tables with mah-jong paper or clear plastic sheets. Easy-to-clean wall paints or 'chalkboard' paints are also another option you may want to consider. Other alternative painting tools include vegetable/texture stamping or hand/foot stamp.
- **Create a play wall** by placing a collection of different toys or create a water wall to teach simple scientific principles such as gravity or to illustrate the rain cycle.
- **Use existing toys or everyday household items in different ways!** If your toddler loves singing, hold a concert together. All you need for props is your bed as a stage and a hairbrush as a microphone. Turn your sofa into the Nautilus as you

Did you know?

Play helps your toddler develop new ways of thinking and improves his problem-solving skills. For instance, the physical motions used when making art (e.g. holding paintbrush or scribbling with crayon) help toddlers develop their fine motor skills.



take him on an imaginary journey 20,000 leagues under the sea. Or perhaps you may decide to pile up some cushions on the floor to become a mini-obstacle course that he has to wriggle through – with so many possibilities to explore, the only limit is one's imagination. You can also make your own toys or games, e.g. make your own carom game using bottle caps or set aside a small section of floor for hopscotch, with floor tiles or foam flooring.

- **No time to make something out of scratch?** Head to the nearest store and buy toys or equipment that encourages your toddler to use his imagination or creativity, e.g. building blocks, animal sets, cars/trucks, or modelling clay.

Keeping play safe

Other things to keep in mind include keeping toys or equipment in easily accessible areas such as a playroom or a corner in your home. They can be stored neatly into containers or boxes. Regardless of the toy or game that you make, you should always ensure that safety remains the priority, by ensuring that he does not play unsupervised until he is much older.

Ensure that at least one adult is on hand to supervise as he plays, or better yet, join him for his playtime. Don't forget his health too by ensuring that he maintains basic hygiene, and that he has access to clean air and water. The materials and surfaces that he is frequently in contact with should be cleaned regularly to ensure they are free of bacteria or viruses that may harm him.

Keep your cool if they do draw or paint on walls in other parts of the house. Be firm but gentle; walls can be cleaned but scaring them from expressing their creativity may have a longer lasting impact in future. Lastly, remember that as parents, try not to rely on digital gadgets to pacify your toddler. Sometimes, a little boredom is good for them as it works as an incentive for them to get inventive! You may need to look at your own digital gadget usage as you are his role model; lead by example and do not neglect him by spending too much time with your gadgets at his expense. **PP**

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- Maternal Care
- Parenting Skills
- You & Your Spouse
- Safety and Injury Prevention

High Blood Pressure in Pregnancy

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

One of the most common medical problems during pregnancy is high blood pressure or hypertension. Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy (HDP) are a leading cause of maternal and perinatal mortality globally.

There are four conditions that are classified under HDP.

Preeclampsia-eclampsia:

Preeclampsia occurs when hypertension is detected after 20 weeks of pregnancy, accompanied with proteinuria (excess protein in urine) or other multi-systemic signs of organ damage.

Preeclampsia can lead to eclampsia, which is a seizure attack or convulsive phase of the disorder which can lead to severe complications, including death.

Chronic hypertension: Pre-existing condition of hypertension or one that is detected before 20 weeks of pregnancy is classified as chronic hypertension.

Chronic hypertension with superimposed preeclampsia: Women with pre-existing hypertension are more likely to be diagnosed with preeclampsia. In this case, blood pressure will be worse and signs of preeclampsia will manifest during pregnancy.

Gestational hypertension: This condition occurs when hypertension is detected after 20 weeks of pregnancy, but without other signs related to preeclampsia such as proteinuria.

Who are at risk?

There are various types of pregnancy where you are most at risk to get HDP, such as the first pregnancy, when you are pregnant with multiple babies, or if you are over 40. The risk is also high if you are obese prior to pregnancy, have mother or siblings with a history of HDP, had previous HDP, or suffered from diabetes, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, or scleroderma.

Symptoms of HDP

Pre-existing chronic hypertension might be hard to identify except by monitoring your blood pressure, but there are other symptoms of preeclampsia.

At home

- Severe headaches
- Upper abdominal pain, usually under right side of ribs
- Blurred vision, temporary loss of vision, or sensitivity to light
- Excessive nausea or vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Excessive swelling of feet or hands
- Lack of urine

At the clinic

- Blood pressure readings of 140/90 mm Hg, taken twice, at least four hours apart
- Proteinuria or other signs of kidney problems
- HELLP syndrome (haemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, or low platelet count)

Managing HDP

Your doctor may prescribe different ways of managing your hypertension depending on the type of HDP. Always refer to your doctor before taking any measures to deal with your condition.

Regular prenatal check-up: After being diagnosed with HDP, consult your doctor regularly and as scheduled to monitor HDP symptoms and any complications. Your weight and blood pressure will be measured, with frequent blood and urine tests. Your baby's condition will be monitored to evaluate his growth and well-being. This confirms your condition for proper treatment and care to be given, as there is a possibility of preeclampsia arising even if the initial diagnosis is gestational hypertension.

Proper medications: If you already have pre-existing hypertension, consult your doctor to ensure your medication is safe for pregnancy. Some hypertension medications, like angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, and renin inhibitors, might not be suitable for pregnant women. Do not change, stop taking your drugs, or purchase over-the-counter drugs for other health issues without referring to your doctor.

Preventive measures: It is recommended for high-risk women to take low-dose aspirin or extra calcium supplement (CaCO₃) as a preventive measure. To prevent eclamptic seizure and placental abruption in women diagnosed with preeclampsia, magnesium sulphate can be administered. These preventive measures should be taken after doctor's recommendation and prescription.

Proper and healthy diet: Control your sugar, salt and fat consumption. Increase fruits and vegetables in

Possible complications

- Decreased blood flow to placenta, leading to slow growth, low birth weight, or premature birth
- Placental abruption, which can cause heavy bleeding
- Premature delivery might have to be induced to prevent life-threatening complications
- Future cardiovascular diseases



diet to supply enough nutrients for you and your baby. Drink adequate water. Normally, you would reduce your salt intake to control hypertension, but pregnant women should not skip salt. Follow your doctor's advice regarding this.

Healthy lifestyle: Overweight women with hypertension are advised to lose weight before getting pregnant. While pregnant, you should watch your weight and try not to gain too much. Avoid smoking, drinking, and illicit drugs, especially during pregnancy. These can worsen your blood pressure, contributing to various health problems, and harm you and your baby. Stay active by doing regular exercises that are suitable, such as brisk walking or gardening. However, do not exert yourself and be mindful of your pregnancy.

High blood pressure in pregnancy is a prevalent problem, especially in a country like Malaysia where there is a significant population with hypertension. Thus, it is crucial to know how to manage your condition. The most important step is to maintain regular prenatal check-ups with your doctor and to constantly monitor your blood pressure. Other steps mentioned should also be taken to regulate your blood pressure and keep you and your baby healthy. **PP**

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Parents' Habits

Can Negatively Affect Their Children

By **Dato' Dr Andrew Mohanraj**, Consultant Psychiatrist and Malaysian Medical Health Association Deputy President

Have you ever heard your kids curse or lie, and then wonder, "Where did they learn that behaviour from?" A theory called Social Learning Theory developed and written by Albert Bandura, a psychologist, states that learning is influenced by psychological factors and environmental stimuli. This basically means that kids can learn and pick up behaviours by observing their surroundings.

As the saying goes, 'Monkey see, monkey do'. Kids usually learn by imitating the behaviour of the people around them, especially parents, without knowing if the behaviour is good or bad. You may repeatedly tell your kids to follow your instructions, instead of your actions, but the opposite is more likely to happen. Kids tend to retain non-verbal messages compared to verbal directions.



Kids Emulate your Bad Behaviour

Without realising that your kids can learn from observing your behaviour, you might become an unintentional and counter-productive model of bad behaviour to them. Bad habits, harmful lifestyle choices, or mental health issues can negatively affect your kids. As parents, we are often blind to our own bad habits, and you may want to sit down with your partner to talk things out. Remember to approach this positively with the intent to identify and change the bad habit, without resorting to fault-finding.

Dishonesty: There are various reasons why adults or kids lie. They might want to get out of trouble, gain something, protect or impress someone, or many other reasons. Parents may lie to their kids to make their kids behave or to protect their feelings. However, you can unintentionally teach your kids that lying is a normal thing to do if you keep doing it. Kids have the capacity to know that parents are lying when they observe that the facts are different from what you are telling them. Even white lies — innocent, harmless lies, can set an example that lies are alright. In some situations, it is important to teach your kids the difference between lying and being polite.

Cursing: While you may not curse at your kids, there may be times when you feel the need to scold and curse, for example if a person is being rude to you. This might also be an unintentional habit, when you automatically utter curse words whenever you are shocked, for example when you hear a thunder.

No matter the context, kids are very impressionable to curse words even if they do not know the meaning. They might think it is a cool word, or try to attract your attention by using it, and as they grow older, they will learn its meaning. Habitual cursing by parents can definitely affect kids and normalise their use of curse words.



Addiction to gadget/ internet: Nowadays, even toddlers are given gadgets as a tool to distract them from throwing a tantrum. Some parents do this so that they can attend to their own gadgets. As the kids get older, their parents might want to limit their use of gadgets, video games, or social media. However, parents who are themselves glued to their social media pages are not in a position to convince and advise their kids to control their use of gadgets.

Anxiety: Becoming nervous because of an upcoming exam or a looming deadline is normal, but there is a point when you can become overly anxious. Parents with anxiety problems, who are constantly and overly worried about everything can impart a message to their kids that the world is not a safe place. As a result, these kids can grow up to develop an unhealthy pessimistic worldview and have anxiety problems themselves.

Depression: Depression can be caused by various reasons, and being neglected during childhood can be one of them. Parents with depression tend to be cold and indifferent to their kids, and might not notice that they are neglecting them. The emotional development of kids receiving less stimulation, care and attention from their depressed parents can be negatively affected. This can turn into a vicious cycle if the situation goes unresolved.

A positive recommendation is to reflect on your own behaviours, have a talk with your spouse, and see if you practice or have any of these habits or conditions. These behaviours might not seem as bad from your own perspective, but when parenting, they can negatively influence your kids' development and behaviour. After identifying any problems, you have to be determined to resolve these issues and try to get help from relevant resources. Always be aware that kids are very easily influenced by your behaviour and think it through before doing or saying anything bad in front of them. **PP**

Anger problem/Aggression: In the 'Bobo doll' study conducted by Bandura, kids who observed adults acting either aggressively or peacefully towards a toy doll are found to imitate and re-enact the action they observed on the doll. Kids who have witnessed their parents acting aggressively are also found to be more likely to develop aggression or an anger problem. They might get the idea that being aggressive or angry can help resolve their problems, and once they experienced the adrenaline rush or the 'power' that they can get from these actions, it can become a habit.

Inactivity: Parents often tell their kids to be more physically active. At the same time, parents need to consider if they are showing a good example to their kids. Lazy or inactive parents are less likely to take their kids out for recreational activities and will then not be able to encourage their kids to be more active. Kids will be more motivated to do physical activities if they have active and involved parents.

Usage of alcohol/cigarettes/drugs: Kids with parents who use alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes are more likely to start using these substances. Seeing their parents using alcohol or cigarettes to cope with stress can teach kids that substances are needed when dealing with problems in life. This idea can be dangerous and lead kids to abuse these substances.

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MMHA

Malaysian Mental Health Association

Fire Safety Saves Lives

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

Of late, building fires have been on the rise. Malaysia witnessed its own share of infernos where a religious school in Kuala Lumpur went up in flames claiming 23 innocent lives. In spite of the horror of fires, not many parents put emphasis on fire safety awareness.

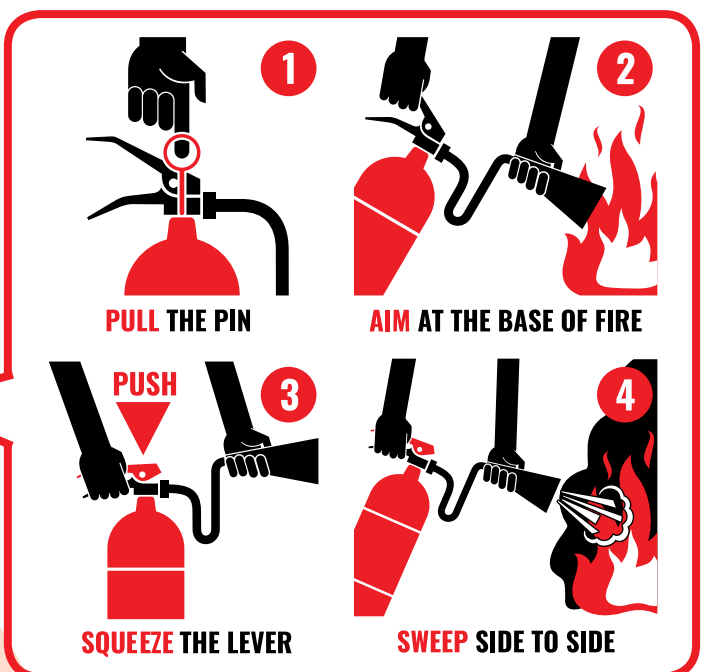
In a study conducted by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2016, only one in three parents actually taught their children about fire safety. This statistic is appalling because this means that people may still be clueless, in the event of a fire or even how to prevent a fire.

Preventing Fire Break Outs

Indisputably, prevention is better than cure. Hence, we have prepared a list of measures for preventing fires in your home.

Safety Devices: Every home should be equipped with a certified fire-extinguisher, which must be serviced and inspected by a fire protection company annually. Everyone needs to learn how to use it as you'll never know where or when a fire can happen. Always remember **PASS** – **P**ull the pin in the handle, **A**im the nozzle at the base of the fire, **S**queeze the handle, **S**weep the nozzle side to side. Another device to install is a smoke detector in rooms and/or hallways. The device will detect smoke and trigger on the alarm, allowing you to take necessary action before it is too late. It needs to be tested monthly to ensure the battery is still functioning. A smoke detector with dead batteries certainly defeats the purpose of saving your life from a fire.

Kitchen Hazard: Do not leave your stove unattended whilst cooking, and make sure that you



have turned off your stove and other cooking appliances (e.g. rice cooker, oven) after you are done. If you use a gas stove, make sure that you do not keep any hot woks or pans on spare gas tanks.

Short Circuit: Short circuit is one of the major culprits of home fires in Malaysia. In fact, 934 cases of fires in this country were due to short circuits and faulty electrical appliances. So, turn off and unplug electrical appliances (e.g. hair dryer, hair curling iron, clothes iron) after using them. Do not leave your phones or laptops charging overnight. If you absolutely have to, do not leave them on your bed or near items that catch fire easily. Do not overload your extension cords or sockets with plugs from various appliances. Do check the electrical cords frequently for signs of fraying and replace all frayed wires.



Escape Plan: Discuss with your family the escape route and conduct fire evacuation drills with them. Advise family members not to block the exits with obstructions such as toys, shoe cabinets and gardening tools. Make sure that all family members know where the house keys, key cards and back door keys are kept. Keep them where it can be easily obtained, like in the living room. If you do have grilles on your windows, then make sure to keep the keys nearby or in every room. It is also advisable to have all grilles share the same key for a quick escape and be aware of where the keys are kept. However, if you are unable to locate the keys in the midst of an emergency, you can use any heavy objects such as furniture to break open to an exit.

Handling Fire Break Outs

Sometimes even with precautions, accidents will still happen. Hence, one needs to know how to handle an emergency situation swiftly, in a calm manner.



Know Your Way Out:

In the event of fire, getting yourself and your family out of danger must be the priority. Quickly alert everyone to leave the building. Do not delay by trying to save valuables or pets or even investigating it, as the fire can spread very quickly. Even if you are scared, never hide under beds or in cupboards as the fire is still spreading. Always use the stairs instead of elevators as they might malfunction due to fire. Try to remain calm and escape using the planned escape route.

Trapped!: If you are trapped in a high-rise building and your escape routes are blocked, go to a room with a window and make your presence known to the rescue team by waving clothes or towels through the window. If it is a landed property that you are trapped in, go to a room with a window, break open the window with heavy objects and escape. You can slow down the progress of fire and smoke from entering a room by blocking the spaces at the bottom of the door using thick blankets and clothes.



Emergency

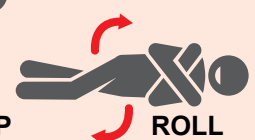
and Rescue: Teach your children the number for emergency services – 999. Also teach them to never abuse the emergency line. Only call the number when it is a real emergency. Notify the rescue team if there is someone still stuck in the burning building. Never attempt to re-enter the building to save them by yourself.



Avoid Smoke Inhalation: If there is smoke, remain as close to the ground as possible as it is less smokey. Smoke inhalation is the leading cause of death among fire accident victims and not burns. Always check for smoke under the door before opening as the room behind the door may be on fire (and the hot door knob can burn your hand).



Clothes on Fire: If your clothes catches fire, never run as doing so will make the fire bigger. Remember to **STOP, DROP** and **ROLL**. Alternatively, you can also use a jacket or a towel to smother the flames as it cuts off the air (oxygen), putting out the fire.



All these tips and measures might save your life in a fire. Parents and children alike should take proactive actions to reduce the risks of fire breaking out. Always get yourself prepared in case of an emergency. Start by formulating a good escape plan and ensure that they are readily available at all times. When everyone is well-versed, the knowledge will also be useful when fires occur in other places such as schools, office buildings, etc. **PP**

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Overcoming the Challenges of Breastfeeding

By **Prof Dr Poh Bee Koon**, Nutritionist

Part 2

Your baby needs proper nutrition which can be achieved simply by exclusively breastfeeding him for the first six months from birth, with continued breastfeeding recommended until two years of age.

This article is a continuation from the previous issue of Positive Parenting Guide Volume 3, 2017, on insufficient milk supply and breastfeeding in public places. This round, we look at problems such as interference from family members and difficulties in expressing breast milk.

Mrs C: Addressing interference from other family members

"My in-laws were always quite accommodating, however, when my child was born (it was also their first grandson), things started to become a little strained. My mother-in-law was constantly fussing over him and would criticise some of my decisions, such as breastfeeding. In her mind, breastfeeding alone was not enough and she kept asking me to feed him with formula milk at night. It took some time before she accepted that breastfeeding was the best – this involved many 'meetings' between my husband and I, with her and several times when we dragged her to our doctor's appointment so that he could educate her on the benefits of breastfeeding."



"Finally earning my mother-in-law's approval to breastfeed my baby was a bittersweet moment. It had helped to strengthen not just my bond with my baby but also made my mother-in-law more open to my ideas and suggestions on how to raise him."



"It was a very challenging time that left me feeling mentally drained after each confrontation but I am glad that I stuck to my decision to breastfeed my baby. It also helped that my husband was always there to provide me with moral support and to give me the confidence to persist in breastfeeding our baby."

Prof Dr Poh:

Breastfeeding has so many advantages to offer both mother and infant. However, successful breastfeeding requires the support of both your partner and your family members. Initially, it can be very tiring and draining (both emotionally and physically) so emotional support and even help with household chores (e.g. cooking, cleaning, laundry) will go a long way towards ensuring that breastfeeding can continue for as long as possible.

Breastfeeding is also by far the best and simplest method for baby and mother to bond. It is hands-down the best food you can offer your baby, as it provides baby with all the nutrients he needs, and even helps protect him from illnesses. What is truly unique about breast milk is that its composition changes every day to meet baby's growing needs. Lastly, in today's challenging economic climate, breastfeeding is a smart move as it saves you money too!



Learn the Right Techniques

Just like breastfeeding, expressing breast milk requires some practice. Spend some time getting the hang of using your breast pump while in the comfort of your home. This way, you won't need to waste any time fumbling with the equipment when you do need to express breast milk for real.

Another item to consider is storing and labelling the expressed breast milk. Care should be taken to store the expressed breast milk properly in order to minimise spoilage. This can be achieved by either refrigerating it immediately or storing it in a cooler bag with ice packs (this allows you to keep it for up to 24 hours provided you ensure that the ice packs are in contact with the milk containers at all times and you limit how often you open the cooler bag).

Be sure to label each package or container the milk is kept in with the date and time it is expressed. When

Puan D: Expressing breast milk

"Most working mothers have to contend with a different set of problems such as how to ensure that their breast milk doesn't run out. The simplest method I found was to express breast milk while I was at work, and store it for later use. At least this way, I could still ensure that my baby can get his supply of breast milk, even when I'm busy at work. Of course, there are other problems to get around, such as finding a place to express and safely store the expressed breast milk, in order to get it home safely. If you are a first time mother or never tried expressing breast milk before, you should check with your doctor for advice on how to proceed. There are also a lot of different types of breast pumps in the market – my advice is to check for reviews before you buy one. You can check online or ask friends or colleagues who have used them before to see which you would prefer."



"Expressing breast milk has given me the confidence to concentrate on work. I no longer have to worry that baby is not getting his breast milk even though I am away. It also means that I am able to continue breastfeeding him after going back to work, and another benefit is that he will have enough expressed breast milk to last, even if I have to travel due to work for a few days."



"Recently I had to go on a two day business trip and it was quite a hassle to have to find a time and place to express breast milk during the trip. I was also quite upset as I had to discard most of the expressed breast milk since I was travelling by plane and did not want to risk spoilage."

Prof Dr Poh:

As women make up a large percentage of the workforce, expressing breast milk and storing it properly is not only a useful skill to learn, it is essential in order to continue breastfeeding baby up to six months and beyond. In addition to this, storing breast milk also enables you to allow someone else such as your partner to feed baby or to keep as an emergency store of milk.

stored in the refrigerator, it can be kept for up to three days – if frozen, it can be kept for up to three months (use within 24 hours after thawing). Discard if there was a power outage leading to them thawing or if they have been kept for more than three months.

As you can see, breastfeeding is not without its challenges, but you should keep at it. Don't be afraid to speak to someone about the challenges you face – you are not alone! Many other mothers out there face the same challenges, so take heart and persevere. Know that with lots of patience and perseverance, you can breastfeed successfully! **PP**

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Nutrition Society of Malaysia

The Right Diet is Crucial for a Child's Optimal Growth and Development!

By **Dr Roseline Yap**, Nutritionist & Council Member, Nutrition Society of Malaysia

It is definitely an exciting moment watching your child's each developmental milestone from taking his/her first step to participating in a school's Sports Day. Besides gaining physical strength and coordination, early formative years (0-8 years old) are also the time where a child's cognitive, emotional and social developments are polished. In fact, growth is most rapid in the first year of life when an infant's length increases by 50%.

A healthy diet fuels the body with energy and nutrients, allowing it to function optimally. Children should consume the right calorie amount for their age and adequate nutrients such as carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins and minerals to ensure optimum growth and development. If children do not have enough nutrients during rapid growth, it will restrict their growth and development, causing insufficient weight gain and height attainment. Yet, too much calories and lack of physical activity lead to overweight and obesity. The findings from Malaysia's National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2016 revealed that there was still a high prevalence of stunting (20.7%) and underweight (13.7%) in children below five years old, while the prevalence of overweight has increased to 6.4%.

Overweight and obese children have an increased risk of diet-related chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes mellitus which often continues to adulthood. Stunted kids, on the other hand, often experience detrimental long-term effects such as diminished cognitive and physical development contributing to reduced productive capacity and poor health in adulthood. Thus, it is crucial for parents to ensure their child is getting the right nutrition for optimal growth and development.

Balanced, Moderate and Varied Diet

When planning meals for your child, remember these 3 basic tips.

Balance: A well-balanced diet means to include all the food groups from the Malaysian Food Pyramid in each meal of the day. Eat more foods from the bottom levels and less from the higher levels.

Moderate: Too much or too little is unhealthy especially when it comes to foods and nutrients. It is important to eat the right and sufficient amount following the recommended servings for each food group.

Variety: Eating a variety of food provide us all the required nutrients while increasing diet quality and making it more exciting!



Rice, Cereal & Tubers: As a main energy source, children should eat adequate amounts of carbohydrates. Opt for whole grains as it also provides more dietary fibre for healthy digestion. Start introducing whole grains to children as early as possible and target to achieve half of the daily consumption of grains from whole grains. Try mixing brown rice together with white rice as a start, then make a full switch once your children have accepted the taste and texture.

Fruits & Vegetables: A variety of fruits and vegetables are a must for children to have their daily dose of phytonutrients, dietary fibre, vitamins (e.g. vitamin A, C) and minerals. Establish the principle of “5-a-day” – 5 servings of fruits and vegetables in different colours daily – in early life to make it as a habit carried to adulthood.

Fish, Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Legumes, & Nuts: Protein is the key in children’s growth – to build, maintain and repair body tissues. Lack of protein at a young age will compromise the body’s immune functions. Fish such as mackerel, tuna and salmon are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids (i.e. omega-3 and omega-6) for the child’s brain function. Consume meat, poultry and eggs moderately as they can be high saturated fats, increasing heart disease risk in adulthood. Do limit processed foods (e.g. burger patties, sausages, fish ball, nuggets) which are high in salt and preservatives.

Milk & Milk Products: Milk and milk products (e.g. yoghurt, cheese) supply many essential nutrients such as calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamin A and D, which are needed for children’s growth. Calcium is especially important to ensure the growth of strong bones and teeth in children. Thus, parents should encourage children to drink milk and consume other milk products daily. Your child can meet the daily requirement of 2-3 servings by drinking 3 glasses of milk daily or 1 glass of milk, 1 cup of yoghurt and 1 slice of cheese a day.

Healthy Eating Behaviours

There are various healthy eating habits that can be ingrained in the early years so that they will last a lifetime.

- **Never skip breakfast.** A nutritious breakfast fuels up a child and enables him to be more energised and stay alert in school.
- **Minimise consumption of food high in fat, oil, sugar and salt.** Too much of these contribute to chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure). Try fresh herbs and spices as alternatives to enhance food flavour and taste. Use healthier cooking methods such as boiling, steaming, or grilling for less fats and oils.
- **Encourage healthy snacking.** Healthy snacks are a good way to improve diet quality and prevent overeating at mealtimes.

Inculcate healthy options of multi-grain biscuits, milk, yoghurt, popcorn or fresh fruits and limit snacks like donuts, potato chips or lekor which are high in sugar, salt and/or fats.



Adequate Exercise

Exercise is very important for a child’s growth and development. It improves cognitive function by increasing blood and oxygen

flow to the brain. Exercise also promotes physical growth. Bones will be stronger and denser when put to work. In addition to weekly Physical Education in school, allocate at least 60 minutes daily for exercise or sports (e.g. jogging, cycling, badminton, football). Limit sedentary habits of watching television and/or playing online games. Children who learn to enjoy exercise or play sports are more likely to become active adults.

Parents play an important role model to their children, and should practise healthy eating and be physically active themselves. Spend more parent-children time in healthy lifestyle activities such as preparing healthy meals or exercising together to cultivate healthy lifestyle habits in the family. Malnutrition (over- and under-nutrition) during childhood have long lasting effects. Practise the right diet and healthy lifestyle from young is crucial for the child’s optimal growth and development, to be healthy adults later in life. **PP**

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*Based on sales share data reported by Image, Ltd for the Heavy Duty Laundry Detergent Category (January 2018 to December 2018).

FUN In the Kitchen

The kitchen is another avenue (or place) of learning and exploring creativity. Your child can learn simple kitchen skills suitable for his age and literally play with his food as he decorates and eats his meal after that. Try the easy and healthy Sardine Fried Rice recipe (with your supervision, of course) which will be fun for this holiday season.

Sardine Fried Rice

Suggested number of servings: 3

Ingredients

- ✿ 186 g (1 cup) brown rice
- ✿ 155 g (1 small can) sardines
- ✿ 15 ml (1 tablespoon) oil
- ✿ 150 g (1 cup) frozen mixed vegetables
- ✿ 13 g (1 whole) small onion
- ✿ 5 g (1 clove) garlic
- ✿ 5 ml (1 teaspoon) soy sauce
- ✿ 3 pieces dried seaweed
- ✿ A pinch of salt and pepper



Preparation

1. Wash the rice and cook in a rice cooker.
2. Drain the sardines, keep the sauce aside, then mash the sardines with a fork.
3. Chop the onion and garlic into small pieces.
4. Slice the dried seaweed.



Let's cook

1. Fry the onions and garlic with oil until fragrant in a pan.
2. Pour the sardines into the pan and fry for 2 minutes.
3. Stir in the frozen mixed vegetables and cook for another 3 minutes.
4. Add cooked rice and stir well.
5. Add soy sauce and the remaining sauce from the sardine can.
6. Add a pinch of salt and pepper.
7. Continue to stir and cook until rice is dry and fluffy.
8. Remove from heat, garnish with seaweed and serve immediately on a plate.

Recipe courtesy of "Junior Chef Cookbook, Vol 1: Let's Play Healthy Cooking" by Nutrition Society of Malaysia. To purchase this recipe book which includes 35 recipes, please email to: president@nutriweb.org.my

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Nutrient content per serving

Calorie : 372 kcal

● Carbohydrate : 56.8 g

● Protein : 14.7 g

● Fat : 9.6 g

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Help Your Child have a Healthy Gut

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

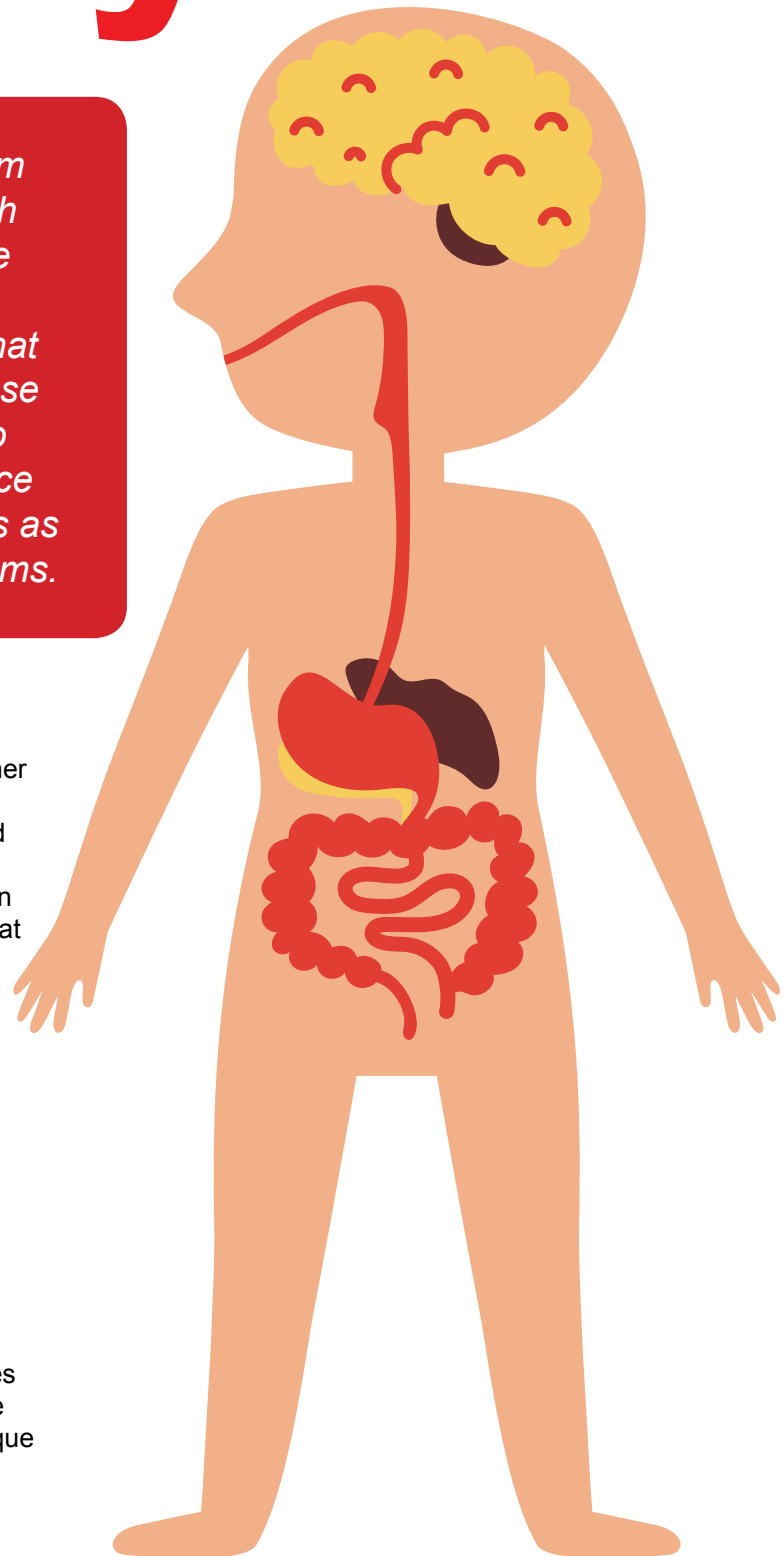
Your child's gastrointestinal (GI) system plays a very important role in his health and wellbeing. The GI system is where food is digested and nutrients are absorbed, thus it is critical to ensure that it functions optimally. In addition to these essential functions, the GI system also serves as the body's first line of defence against disease and infection as it acts as a barrier against harmful microorganisms.

Additionally, the gut is home to various types of microorganisms collectively known as gut microbiota. They consist of a variety of bacteria which can be either beneficial or detrimental to our health. The balance between 'good' and 'bad' bacteria must be maintained in order to achieve good gut health. An imbalance of gut microbiota may lead to diarrhoea or constipation in children. Having a healthy balance will help ensure that your child's gut health is at an optimal level, thereby leading to a healthy child.

Gut Microbiota Play Critical Role

There is a wealth of scientific evidence that shows how maintaining a healthy balance of gut microbiota helps with everything; from immunity, better nutrient absorption, better mood, and even improvements in brain function and energy levels.

In addition to this, gut microbiota are also responsible for making certain vitamins (e.g. Vitamin B12 and Vitamin K), hormones (e.g. serotonin), and metabolites which are important for good health. Interestingly, the exact makeup of the gut microbiota is completely unique from individual to individual. It is influenced by many factors, including dietary pattern.



Five Simple Steps

There are five simple yet important steps to ensure good gut health for your child, namely:



To **eat right**, ensure that he takes a balanced diet with moderate portions that contain a variety of foods every day. It is also important to provide him with sufficient whole grains, fruits, and vegetables as this will provide him with a healthy diet rich in dietary fibre, which are non-

digestible carbohydrates. Some of these dietary fibres can serve as prebiotics which help feed the 'good' bacteria in his gut. These include banana, garlic, onions, shallots, leeks, and asparagus. Remember to limit his intake of deep-fried and sugary food/drinks as well.



Regular **physical activity or exercise** is also an important factor. Do encourage him to get at least one hour's worth of any type of physical activity on a daily basis, e.g. badminton, swimming, running around the playground, etc.

Exercise and physical activity helps his digestive system to run smoothly, by promoting regular bowel movements, improving his appetite, and helping maintain a healthy body weight.



Get him to **drink enough water** every day, at a minimum of eight glasses daily. More may be required on hot days or on days when he plays sports or exercises vigorously. It is a much better choice than sugar sweetened beverages which

are high in unnecessary calories. By ensuring that he drinks sufficient water, you are also ensuring that his GI system is 'lubricated' and food can travel easily through his intestines.



Good hygiene is crucial in order to minimise or prevent bad bacteria from easily making its way into his gut. Make it a point to teach him the importance of good personal hygiene, particularly things such

as washing his hands after using the loo or before meals. You may have heard some people use the phrase "cleanliness is next to godliness", which serves to illustrate just how crucial hygiene is.



Growing children need to get **sufficient sleep** in order to maximise their growth potential. As a rough guide, an indicator that your child needs more sleep is if he has trouble waking up in the mornings or is constantly irritable and fussy when he is awake. The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a sleep guideline in 2016 which recommends that:

- **infants** (4-12 months) need **12-16 hours** of sleep per day (including naps),
- **toddlers** (1-2 years) need **11-14 hours** of sleep per day (including naps),
- **young kids** (3-5 years) need **10-13 hours** of sleep per day (including naps),
- **primary school kids** (6-12 years) need **9-12 hours** of sleep per day, and,
- **teenagers** (13-18 years) need **8-10 hours** of sleep per day.

Little Helpers

The gut microbiota consists of a wide variety of microorganisms; probiotics are the live bacteria which provide us with health benefits. Ensuring that your child has a sufficient amount of 'good' bacteria in his body helps maintain a healthy gut microbiota balance, thus preventing or minimising any problems. Foods that are rich in probiotics normally come from fermented milk products (e.g. yoghurt, cultured milk drink, kefir and cheeses), fermented soy products (e.g. *tempeh*), and fermented vegetables (e.g. kimchi and pickles).

Be His Role Model

Lastly, remember that all children look up to their parents, so be sure to walk the talk in order to ensure that he has the best role model to look up to. In addition to helping pave the way to a healthier gut, this also helps bring you and your child closer together. By starting him off as early as possible, you will be well on your way to getting him to learn healthy habits and start caring for his own gut health. **PP**

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Billions of Good Bacteria for a Healthy Digestive System

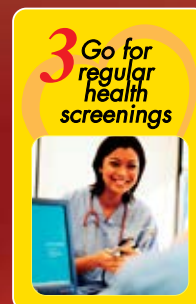
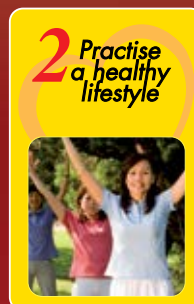
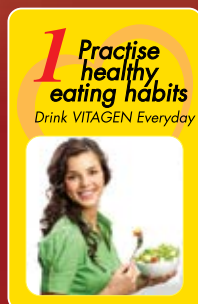
Why is your digestive health so important?

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!



Lactobacillus cultures (good bacteria)



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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Elimination Diet for Food Allergies

By **Dr Amir Hamzah Abdul Latiff**, Consultant Paediatrician & Consultant Clinical Immunologist/Allergist (Adults & Paediatrics)

If your child has food allergies, his paediatrician may recommend that he be placed on a food elimination diet. What it means is that you will need to temporarily eliminate specific foods from his diet, and possibly your diet as well if you are still breastfeeding him. The elimination diet should last around 2-4 weeks.

This method is normally combined with skin or blood tests, and its purpose is to help identify specific foods which are triggering his food allergies. By avoiding the suspected food trigger, both you and his paediatrician can monitor his symptoms, e.g. his symptoms should disappear if the foods that trigger his allergy are not on the elimination diet. As an additional step to help determine the exact offending food, his paediatrician may ask for it to be reintroduced to his diet gradually. Any return of his symptoms would signify that he is likely allergic to the food that was reintroduced.



Allergy vs intolerance

Food allergies are caused by the immune system mistakenly identifying specific foods to be harmful, thus reacting by creating immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies to combat the perceived threat. This often results in fairly immediate symptoms (within minutes) which could present as gut-related (abdominal pain, vomiting or diarrhoea), skin reactions (rashes, itching or swelling), respiratory

(runny nose, sneezing or difficulty breathing), or even headaches in older children.

Food intolerance on the other hand, is a purely gut-related problem that is caused by difficulty in digesting certain foods – the immune system is not reacting in any way. Symptoms such as bloating, tummy aches, or diarrhoea, do not normally appear immediately and can take a while before presenting.

Getting started

The eight most common allergenic foods listed by the US Food & Drug Administration are milk, eggs, fish (bass, flounder, cod), crustacean shellfish (crab, lobster, shrimp), tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, wheat, and soybeans.



While preparing fresh foods using raw ingredients may be the best solution, this may not always be possible. Do exercise extra care whenever you buy processed foods. It is imperative that you read the product labels carefully before buying and serving them to your child. This will help ensure that the processed foods you buy do not contain any of the foods that are in his food elimination diet.

As an example, if soy is part of the foods to be eliminated, buying processed foods that contain soy (commonly labelled as lecithin) would most likely skew the results, particularly if your child is allergic to soy. Other common ingredients to be aware of include flour, which is often listed as wheat, and whey, which is often listed as milk. If you are unsure about the processed food, it would be better to err on the side of caution and avoid it.

Keeping track

Keeping a food diary in conjunction with the food elimination diet is a good habit, as it could potentially be useful to help in identifying problem foods. Make it a point to accurately record all symptoms (including number of times and duration) and everything that your child ate or drank. In addition to food and drinks taken during main meals, this should also include prescribed medicines, supplements, and any sweets or snacks he takes. Yes, even taking a taste from someone else's plate or cup counts!

Date	Time	Food Eaten	Quantity	Symptom experienced	Time and duration

A basic food diary

Start with a fresh page every day. Remember to bring it along with any food packaging or labels during consultation sessions with your child's allergist, in order to give him a complete picture to help him in his analysis.

Tips for success

By this point, it should be apparent that going on a food elimination diet can be quite complex. It is important to plan it and ensure that you take careful note throughout the course of the elimination diet. Here are things you can do to help yourself:

- **Preparation is key** – spend a little time doing some research prior to starting the elimination diet. Do search for elimination-diet-friendly recipes beforehand. You may also want to search for suitable processed foods ahead of time.
- **Stock up before starting** – in addition to getting recipes, you should also ensure that you have all the necessary ingredients ahead of time. Be sure to also stock up on snacks or light foods that are elimination-diet-friendly. This will help increase your chances of following the elimination diet, especially on days when your child is hungry or just wants something to nibble on.
- **Clean out the clutter** – take some time to go through your kitchen and other parts of your house to look for foods that are not elimination-diet-friendly. Make sure that you either hide them well, discard them (if they are almost expired) or give them away. By removing non-elimination-diet-friendly foods, you also remove any temptation to your child. This will pre-empt situations where your child may see his favourite snack (that is part of the eliminated food) in plain sight and demands to have some.
- **Keep all caregivers in the loop** – be sure to involve all caregivers in this exercise as they will help ensure that your child adheres to his elimination diet. This includes the people who will care for him in daycare, kindergarten or school. For school-going children, it is important that you discuss this in detail with him in order to ensure his cooperation as well. You may need to prepare meals for him, unless you are 100% sure that the foods prepared by the canteen can comply with his elimination diet. It may also be necessary to inform family members and parents of friends in order to avoid accidentally sharing/giving food.

Lastly, do note that the elimination diet may not yield conclusive results, in which case your child's allergist may recommend an oral food challenge in order to check any inconclusive results. However, it is very important that any elimination diets be taken ONLY under the supervision of an experienced medical professional, in order to avoid possible problems such as malnutrition. **PP**

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Best Start for Baby's Gut Microbiota

By **Assoc Prof Dr Noorizan H.A Majid**, Paediatric Gastroenterologist

Your baby's gut microbiota begins developing after he is born, with his first exposure during vaginal birth and from breast milk.

These are the two main sources where he gets his gut microbiota mix of bacteria, e.g. *Bifidobacteria* and *Lactobacillus*, and both of these good bacteria can also be acquired from probiotic-rich foods. In the case of breastfed babies, research shows that *Lactobacillus* is outnumbered by *Bifidobacteria* by a ratio of 2 to 8.

The general consensus is that vaginal births provide the best start possible (in terms of initial gut microbiota seeding) when compared against caesarean section births and only one study refutes this.

What this means for baby

Thus, breastfeeding is crucial not just in providing overall nutrition and optimal growth for your baby, it is also essential in helping shape his gut microbiota as well. Breast milk is a rich concoction of many nutrients that baby needs, including prebiotics in the form of oligosaccharides and glycoconjugates, which pass undigested through his small intestine and acts as a prebiotic in his colon. This helps support the establishment of *Bifidobacteria*.

Did you know?

Prebiotics are food for the probiotics (which are the 'good' bacteria). Prebiotics can be in the form of macronutrients such as oligosaccharides (e.g. galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS), or dietary fibre from foods such as legumes, wholegrain foods, fruits, and vegetables.

However, the establishment of *Bifidobacteria* can be influenced by environmental factors such as a short duration of breastfeeding, breast milk quality, the use of anti-microbial products, and antibiotic usage. There is evidence that shows how breastfed babies exhibit a more stable and uniform gut microbiota when compared to formula-fed babies, and they also tend to have less bad bacteria in their guts.

Building up good bacteria

As your breast milk is the main source of prebiotics and probiotics for your baby, here are some Do's & Don'ts that mothers should observe in order to help him achieve a well-balanced gut microbiota.

Do's

- **Take care to eat healthily** – your doctor may advise you if there are any foods that you should avoid, especially if you have any chronic diseases such as diabetes or hypertension. Ensure that your diet is nutritionally complete – this is especially important during breastfeeding as you will need to provide sufficient nutrients to your baby via your breast milk. If there are any medical reasons why you cannot breastfeed him, do check with your paediatrician on how you can best ensure that his gut microbiota continues developing properly.
- **Maintain good digestive health** – be sure to eat sufficient prebiotics and probiotics-rich food to ensure that your own digestive system is in top form to defend against disease and infections. Probiotic-rich foods include fermented milk products (such as cultured milk drink, yoghurt and cheeses), fermented soy products (such as *tempeh*), and fermented vegetables (such as *acar*, kimchi and pickles). Older infants who have begun complementary feeding or toddlers should also be encouraged to eat probiotic-rich foods. Do talk to his paediatrician for details on how to maintain a healthy ratio of *Lactobacillus* to *Bifidobacteria*.
- **Stay physically active** – although it can be physically draining, don't neglect your own physical health. Try aiming for an accumulated total of an hour's worth of physical activity or exercise every day. A simple routine might be going for a brisk walk with baby around the park in the morning and evening (15 minutes each time) followed by another one session (30 minutes) of yoga, or perhaps even split it further into another two 15-minute session of some other activity such as swimming or jogging. As with any form of exercise, don't over-exert yourself and keep to an activity level that leaves you sweating but not panting heavily or badly out of breath.



Don'ts

- **Antibiotic usage** – make it a habit NOT to request for antibiotics when you visit a doctor. If your doctor does prescribe it, do check whether it is absolutely necessary or not. Chances are high that you may not need it at all, especially if you have a viral infection. Antibiotics only affect bacterial infections, and taking them usually leads to an imbalanced gut microbiota as it also kills the probiotics, thus allowing other bacteria a chance to flourish. An unwanted side-effect is antibiotic-associated diarrhoea, which can be alleviated by reintroducing probiotics – do check with your doctor on this if you face this problem.
- **Antibacterial product usage** – these include products such as soaps, detergents, and other cleaning products labelled as 'anti-bacterial'. In the case of antibacterial soaps, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) suggest using plain soap and water as there is insufficient scientific evidence to back the manufacturers' claims. In fact, wide usage of these products is even suspected to have potentially negative health effects. Be sure to check that the product you are buying does not contain the active ingredients called triclosan and triclocarban. Stick with the usual hand-washing practices as it is effective in preventing the spread of most infections and illnesses. FDA's recommendation only covers consumer antibacterial soaps and body washes used with water, not other products such as hand sanitisers/wipes or antibacterial soaps used in healthcare (e.g. hospitals).

Stay the course

While getting your baby's gut microbiota off to a good start is important, don't let it be the main focus of your experience with him. By focusing on breastfeeding instead, you will achieve this while also ensuring that he gets all the nutrients he needs to grow. Additionally, breastfeeding also helps strengthen your bond with him. Be sure to breastfeed him according to the recommendations, i.e. exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continue to breastfeed until two years of age. **PP**

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- Contains prebiotic, galactooligosaccharides (GOS) which has strong bifidogenic and anti-pathogenic effects.³



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Debunking Vaccination Misconception

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

Last year, Malaysians were shocked to hear about the re-emergence of diphtheria cases in Malaysia. 23 cases and 5 deaths were reported last year, and this year, the number is still at a worrying level. At the same time, there are increasing numbers of parents who refuse vaccination for their children.

These two phenomena can be attributed to the rising anti-vaccination movement on Malaysian social media. This movement is fuelled by all kinds of myths and misconception related to vaccination that are being propagated by irresponsible parties. We have addressed some of the false information regarding vaccination in past Positive Parenting issues, which you can find on our website. In this article, we debunk other vaccination myths as highlighted by World Health Organization (WHO) and set things straight.



Vaccines can cause dangerous side effects that we might not be aware about

In general, vaccines are safe to the majority of the population. Even if there are occasional side effects from vaccination, usually they are mild adverse events that are minor and temporary, such as swelling, sore arm, or mild fever. These can be managed by taking paracetamol after vaccination. Adverse events that are more serious, usually due to allergies, do occur, but very rarely. This can be prevented by proper consultation with your doctor before vaccination, to identify if the vaccine is suitable for your kids. Before being given vaccines, a set of questions will be asked to recipients to screen them for any particular risks. Furthermore, there are multiple organisations, locally and globally, that monitor the safety of vaccines and the occurrence of adverse events after immunization, such as the Global Vaccine Safety Initiative (GVSII) by the WHO and our own vaccine-monitoring system by Malaysia's Ministry of Health. Other than that, various claims purportedly linking vaccines to different diseases have been disproven. One popular claim relating MMR vaccine to autism have actually been refuted as no causal connection between these two can be found after extensive studies, and even the single research paper the anti-vaccine movement based their argument on has long been retracted.



Vaccination is unnecessary since vaccine-preventable diseases have been eliminated in my country

In Malaysia, many vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio and smallpox have been eliminated. However, it does not mean that the diseases no longer exist. As smallpox has been completely eradicated, our children no longer need smallpox vaccination. Polio, on the other hand, is still present in two countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) and can be imported into Malaysia by travellers. Apart from that, there is a small percentage of the population who cannot be vaccinated (due to allergy, for example) and who are not responsive to vaccines. For this population, their only chance of protection comes from herd immunity, and the effect of herd immunity can only work when there is a high rate of vaccination.



Diseases disappear because of better hygiene and sanitation, not because of vaccination

Many of us today have never seen an actual case of polio or smallpox, which used to be endemic in the world several decades ago. Some people claim that better hygiene and sanitation led to the disappearance of such diseases. This claim is not false, but there are many other factors that contributed to the decrease in the incidence of diseases, and one major factor is widespread vaccination. This can be seen when there are significant drops in the incidence of disease that coincided directly with the introduction of vaccination programme. For example, right after the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1963, a permanent drop in the number of measles cases was observed. Additionally, an immediate increase of incidence was also observed when there was a lag in vaccination. This effect was seen in Britain, when a decreased vaccination rate during the 70s due to the scare campaign against pertussis vaccine led to a dramatic rise of incidence of the disease there. We may also witness this effect in Malaysia if the anti-vaccination movement in Malaysia continues to be a trend.



Multiple vaccinations for different diseases that are given in combination to children can overload their immune system

It is generally known that we are exposed to multiple foreign antigens in daily activity, and this also applies to our children. Thus, additional antigens from multiple vaccinations would not burden their immune system. Available scientific data has shown that combination vaccinations have no adverse effects on the immune system of a normal child. Various studies and reviews have also shown that combination vaccination is as effective and safe as a single vaccination. In fact, combination vaccination can be better for you, by providing all the benefit of a single vaccination with fewer shots. Vaccines are usually given at an early age for better protection to infants, and most vaccines are usually due at the same time. Thus, combination vaccinations would be practical in this case. Combination vaccinations also need fewer shots and hence, fewer sessions. Therefore, we can save time and money, and also ensure a complete vaccination for our children.



More vaccinated people get infected than unvaccinated people

In certain cases, the number might reflect this claim, but it does not show that vaccine is ineffective. This is due to the fact that there is a majority of people vaccinated compared to people who are unvaccinated. Also, vaccines are not 100% effective (85 to 95% effective) because some individuals are not responsive to vaccines. However, in local diphtheria cases recently, it was found that all patients were not vaccinated or did not complete the whole course of vaccination. This also shows that the effect of herd immunity has been weakened due to an increase of unvaccinated people in the population.

The advent of technology nowadays has made it easier for us to seek information on our health. However, we should learn to distinguish between real information and misinformation. Referring to experts on issues such as vaccination is important so that you will not endanger your kids and yourself in the pursuit of well-being. **PP**

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FIGHT THE FLU



BREAKING NEWS

4 STRAINS FOR BROADER
INFLUENZA PROTECTION



The **flu** is a contagious illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. It ranges from mild to severe and at times, can even lead to death.¹

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. But the people at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick are:¹



Those of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease



Children



Pilgrims undertaking Hajj or Umrah^{2,3}

- People aged ≥ 50 years*
- People with extreme obesity (BMI ≥ 40)
- Pregnant women
- Healthcare personnel
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities



Flu viruses circulate all year round. Both influenza A and B viruses are responsible for the seasonal flu epidemics that occur each year.⁴



A/H1N1



A/H3N2



B/YAMAGATA



B/VICTORIA

**THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT AGAINST THE FLU IS
BY PREVENTION WITH VACCINATION.^{5,6}**



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*Among adults, complications, hospitalisations, and deaths due to influenza are generally most common among those aged ≥ 65 years. However, adults aged ≥ 50 years are a priority group for vaccination because this group may be more likely to have chronic medical conditions that put them at higher risk of severe influenza illness. REFERENCES: 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Key Facts About Influenza (Flu). Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>. Last accessed Jan 2017. 2. Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia. Health requirements and recommendations for Hajj and Umrah performers and those working in Hajj areas - 2015. Available at <http://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Hajj/HealthGuidelines/HealthGuidelinesDuringHajj/Pages/HealthRegulations1437.aspx>. Last accessed Jan 2017. 3. Tabung Haji. Immunization Information. Available at <http://www.tabunghaji.gov.my/immunization-information>. Last accessed Jan 2017. 4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Influenza (Flu) Viruses. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/>. Last accessed Jan 2017. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>. Last accessed Jan 2017. 6. World Health Organization. Influenza. Vaccine Use. Available at <http://www.who.int/influenza/vaccines/use/en/>. Last accessed Jan 2017.

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Haemophilia In Children

By **Dr Jameela Sathar**, Consultant Haematologist

Your son has just been diagnosed with severe haemophilia. You feel devastated, frightened, sad and shocked. You seek advice from your doctor, read educational materials and connect with other parents. As you get better informed you feel empowered and find the strength to cope with this new journey.



What is Haemophilia?

Haemophilia is a life-long bleeding disorder caused by a defective factor VIII or IX gene on the X-chromosome, which interferes with the clotting process. It affects the male child. There may be a history of haemophilia on the mother's side of the family but sometimes it can occur spontaneously.

Severity of Haemophilia

Haemophilia can be categorised into severe, moderate or mild according to the level of factor in the body. Severe haemophilia (factor level <1%) can cause spontaneous bleeding without any apparent trauma, while moderate (factor level 1 to 5%) and mild haemophilia (factor level >5%) will usually bleed following trauma.

Bleeding Manifestations

Bruises are common when the child starts to crawl but they do not usually require treatment. Gum bleeds commonly occur following trauma or teething. Get your child to suck on ice lollies to stop the bleeding. If bleeding persists, seek treatment at your haemophilia centre.

Haemarthrosis or bleeding into the joints is the hallmark of haemophilia. It usually occurs from year 1 onwards, when your child starts to walk. It commonly affects the knees, ankles and elbows and is extremely painful. Your child may not be able to move the affected limb.



Bleeding into muscles is another feature of haemophilia. Both joint and muscle bleeds have to be treated promptly and adequately, to prevent joint damage and muscle contractures.

Bleeding into the head, throat, neck, stomach and kidneys are serious and require urgent attention. The following are signs and symptoms that require you to contact your haemophilia team and seek immediate treatment:

1. Your child receives a **hard blow to the head**
2. He **lacks alertness** and seems **drowsy**
3. He has episodes of **vomiting**
4. He has **seizures**
5. His **neck is swollen** and **discoloured**
6. His **cries sound different** than usual
7. He has **trouble breathing**
8. His **stools are bloody, black or tar-like**
9. He looks **weak or pale**
10. He has **back pain**
11. He has **bright red or cola-coloured urine**

If factors are available at home and you know how to access a vein, immediately infuse 50 IU/kg of factor to your child before heading to the hospital.

Haemophilia Team Members

The core team should consist of the following members:

- a medical director** (preferably a paediatric and/ or adult haematologist)
- a nurse coordinator** who:
 - coordinates the provision of care
 - educates patients and their families
 - acts as the first contact for patients with an acute problem or who require follow-up
 - is able to assess patients and institute initial care where appropriate
- a pharmacist** who ensures adherence to therapy and availability of factors
- a musculoskeletal expert** (physiotherapist, occupational therapist, orthopaedic surgeon, rheumatologist) who can address prevention as well as treatment
- a laboratory specialist**
- a psychosocial expert** (preferably a social worker, or a psychologist) familiar with available community resources



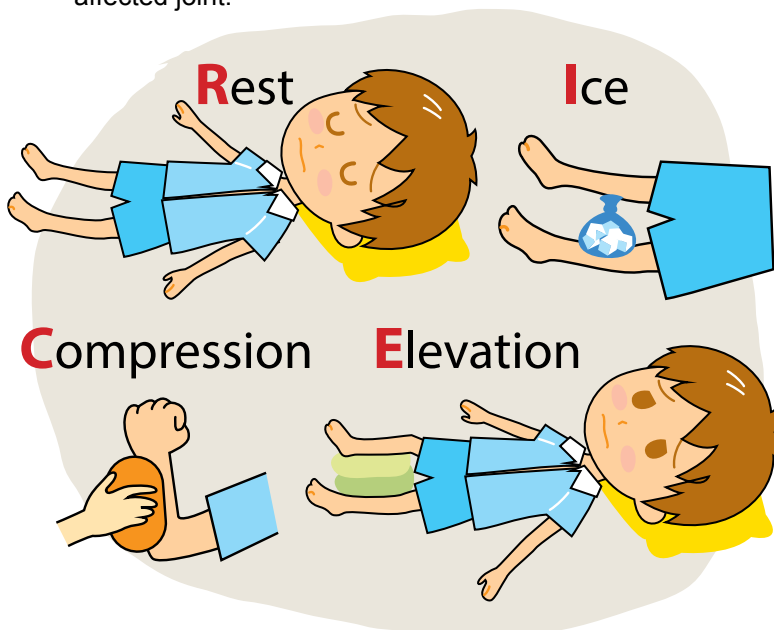
Treatment

A child born with haemophilia today can lead a normal healthy life free from joint damage with prophylaxis i.e. regular factor infusions to prevent bleeding complications. This is usually started from 12 months of age. Parents are taught all about haemophilia and how to dose, access the vein and infuse the factor. Once they are confident, they bring the factors home and continue with home therapy.

Home therapy allows early treatment of bleeds by replacing the factor that is missing; factor VIII for haemophilia A and factor IX for haemophilia B. If in

doubt or if the bleed is serious, treat first and then contact your haemophilia team.

Besides factor replacement, apply **RICE therapy** – **rest, ice, compression and elevation** to the affected joint.



Once the bleeding and joint pain have subsided it is important to start exercises. Strong muscles protect the joints from further bleeds. This should be supervised by an experienced physiotherapist. Owning a pair of crutches is important to take the strain off the other joints, in the event of a joint bleed in the lower limb.

All bleeds and infusion of factors must be documented in a diary. This is important for monitoring treatment outcomes and factor usage.

Advice to parents

- It is normal to feel guilty about having a child with haemophilia, but you must remember it is neither parent's fault.
- Don't be overprotective – if you don't allow your child to take reasonable risks he may not learn to become independent.
- Accept the fact that neither you nor your child can prevent all bleeds. You should not blame yourself or your child for bleeding episodes.
- Realize that the time your child spends crying during an infusion is a small price to pay for the long-term benefits of prophylaxis therapy.
- Help your son understand that haemophilia is just one aspect of his life and don't allow him to use his haemophilia to avoid responsibilities or break rules.
- Encourage siblings to discuss haemophilia openly with you and their brother.
- Include siblings in the general care of the child and do not blame or punish siblings if the child bleeds. **PP**

Meningococcal Meningitis

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

Bacterial Meningitis

The bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*, also called meningococcus, causes meningococcal meningitis worldwide. However, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) and *Streptococcus pneumoniae* are the main contributors to bacterial meningitis in Malaysia where the vaccine for Hib is already included in the National Immunisation Programme (NIP). Unfortunately, the meningococcal vaccine is not routinely recommended and neither is the pneumococcal vaccine.

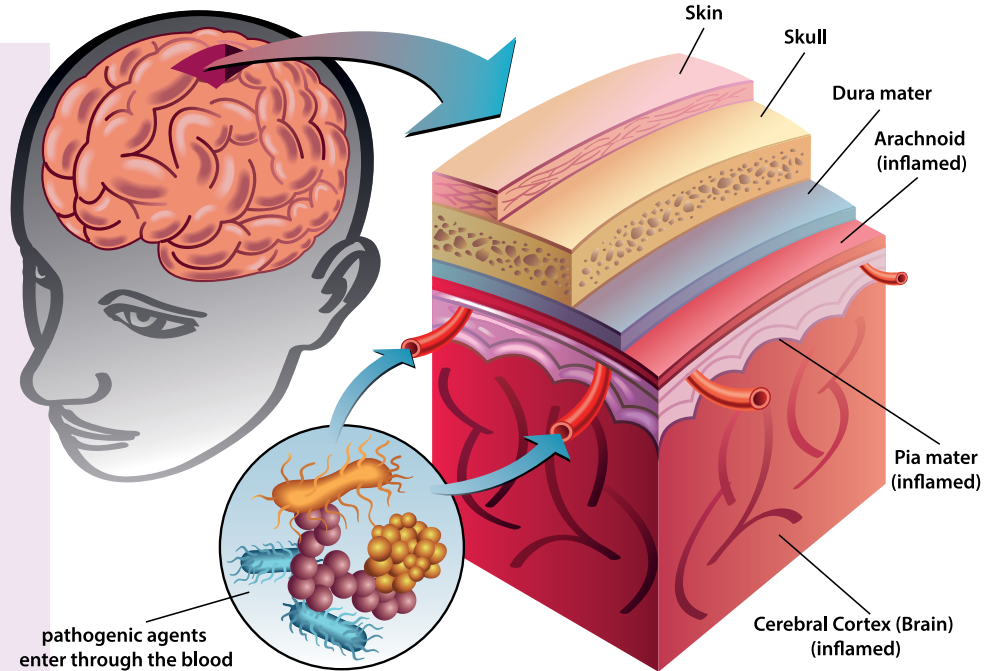


Figure 1: Breach of blood-brain barrier by bacteria and infection of meninges

What Is Meningitis?

The bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* only infect humans and 10% to 20% of the population are asymptomatic carriers of this bacteria. *N.meningitidis* is transmitted from person-to-person through droplets of respiratory (i.e. kissing, sneezing or coughing) or throat secretions from carriers.

The illness occurs when the bacteria break through the protective lining of the nose and throat and enter the bloodstream. Once in the bloodstream, they multiply rapidly, overwhelming the body's defences thus allowing bacteria to cross the blood-brain barrier infecting the meninges, causing meningitis.

THE MENINGES

Meninges refers to three membranes (the dura mater, arachnoid, and pia mater) that line the skull and enclose the brain and spinal cord. Its primary function is to protect the central nervous system.

High Risk Groups & Risk Factors

Infants less than one year and people ages 16 through 23 years are more likely to be infected than other age groups, but cases occur in all age groups including the elderly. Additionally, travellers, especially those headed to the so-called 'meningitis belt' in Africa and pilgrims of the Hajj are similarly at risk.

Meanwhile, some risk factors for the disease can include:

- Household or dormitory crowding
- Active and passive smoking
- Previous case of upper respiratory tract infection
- Chronic underlying illness (e.g. liver failure, lupus)
- Dysfunctional or absence of a spleen
- Properdin deficiency (a rare, genetically-linked condition where a deficiency of a blood plasma component affects immunity)
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

Signs & Symptoms of Infection in Children

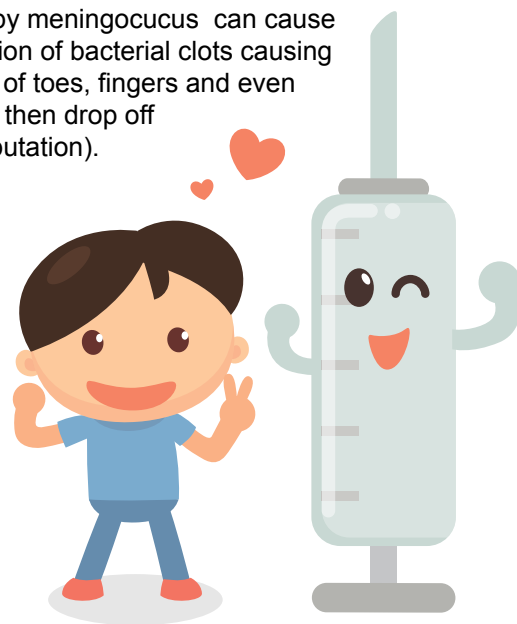
The average incubation period of the bacteria is 4 days – which is fast, but the disease progression is even faster. Therefore, if your child shows any of the symptoms stated below, you should immediately bring him/her to the hospital. Early antibiotic treatment using penicillin, ampicillin, chloramphenicol or ceftriaxone can save lives.

Symptoms often seen in young children:



In newborns and babies, the symptoms of fever, headache, and neck stiffness may be absent or unnoticeable. Instead, they may show signs of irritability, vomiting, poor appetite, or appear to be slow or inactive.

Infection by meningococcus can cause embolisation of bacterial clots causing gangrene of toes, fingers and even limbs that then drop off (auto amputation).



Protecting Your Child

Unfortunately, despite adequate and early treatment, 10-15% of patients die, typically within 24-48 hours after getting infected. Most survivors make a full recovery without long-term effects, however 10-19% of them may suffer from permanent disability (e.g. hearing loss, loss of limb, or neurological damage). Hence, preventing infection through immunisation is preferred.

Malaysia has long approved the use of the meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine which can be used for children starting from 2 years and above. Since the 2002 Hajj meningococcal outbreaks, Saudi health officials require pilgrims to be vaccinated against all 4 main meningococcal serogroups (A, C, Y and W135).

The more recent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) is far more efficacious and can protect against all 4 main meningococcal serogroups. Unlike its polysaccharide counterpart, MCV can be administered as early as 6 weeks of age and it also prevents carriage of the bacteria. You can get your child vaccinated at clinics or hospitals that provide them but be sure to consult your paediatrician first. **PP**

An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association

JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST **PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE** WITH

SUPER CAPE KID

**PNEUMOCOCCAL INFECTIONS
RESULT IN THE ESTIMATED DEATH
OF 476,000 CHILDREN ANNUALLY
WORLDWIDE.¹**

POW!

**VACCINATION IS THE BEST WAY
TO PREVENT AGAINST
PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE.²
ASK YOUR DOCTOR TODAY.**

Pneumococcal disease is
caused by bacteria known as
Streptococcus pneumoniae.¹

It can result in:
Infection of the lung¹ (Pneumonia)
Infection in the bloodstream¹ (Bacteremia)
Infection of lining of the brain and spinal cord¹ (Meningitis)
Infection of the middle ear¹ (Otitis Media)

In your children, watch out for
fever, chills, cough and
breathing difficulty.²

Pfizer

References:

1. World Health Organisation (WHO). Pneumococcal vaccines WHO position paper – 2012. Wkly Epidemiol Rec 2012;37(14):129–144.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pneumococcal Disease and the Vaccine (Shot) to Prevent It. CDC website. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pamphlets/diseases/child/pneumo.html>. Accessed on 11 May 2016.

My Positive Teen

- Socio-emotional
- Conditions and Diseases

Social Skills for Youths

By **Dr Nazeli Hamzah**, Consultant Paediatrician & Past President of the Malaysian Association for Adolescent Health



Social skills are an important, yet often neglected, skillset that every teen needs in order to grow into a healthy and productive adult. As parents, you are their first social skills teacher. While many aspects of a teen's social skills can be attributed to a child's innate ability, both circumstances and his environment play a large role in building his social skills.

However, awareness of the importance of social skills has been increasing in recent years. Without doubt, better social skills give your child a significant advantage in life. Benefits include better and more positive relationships, improved extra-curricular performance, greater self-esteem, better self-image, and are generally more resilient to life's challenges.

Building Social Skills

Social skills can be described as the skills of interacting and communicating with other people. Here are some basic social skills that are increasingly forgotten in the digital age:

- **Eye contact:** This is a powerful social skill that works in any social setting. With so many distractions in the form of smartphones, tablets,

etc., it is all too easy to lose your focus when talking to someone. Put aside any digital gadgets during conversations, you can always get back to it after your conversation is over. However, do moderate the amount of eye contact. Too much will either come across as intense or creepy, while no eye contact conveys a lack of interest; bear in mind that there is no such thing as a perfect amount of eye contact, so it will depend on the situation. For instance, if your teen gives a presentation to his class, eye contact can be random and not focused on only one person.

**Important note: exercise your discretion as direct eye contact depends on cultural biases. For instance, it may be considered rude for a much younger person to stare right into an elder's eyes (it may be deemed disrespectful or challenging the elder's authority).*

■ **Tone of voice:** While the content of what is said is important, the manner in which it was spoken plays an even bigger role. Take the word “Yes” as an example. With the right intonation, it can be made to sound like an answer “Yes!”, uncertainty “Ye-es..” or even a question “Yes?”. So pay attention to how you speak as it forms the core of verbal communication.

■ **Body language:** Visual cues provide us with a lot of input when communicating with someone. Facial expressions and body positioning forms the basis for most non-verbal communication and being unaware of them can lead to miscommunication, e.g. reading a book or watching TV while talking to someone gives the impression that you are not interested in what they are saying. Similarly, sitting with arms folded and legs crossed also give the impression that you are not interested in talking, even though in reality you may just be cold and are trying to stay warm!

Other Important Skills

In addition to the points highlighted earlier, you should be his role model by ensuring that you practise the following skills with your teen, such as:

■ **Active listening:** rather than just relying on your sense of hearing, this skill actively shows that you are focused on the conversation. Here, you focus your attention on the speaker and let him do most of the talking. It involves the following aspects:

- give him your full attention (maintain eye contact) and also watch his body language.
- let him talk without interrupting him (ask questions later or during a lull in the conversation).
- encourage him to continue using verbal cues (e.g. “I see”) or non-verbal cues (e.g. nodding your head).
- When he has finished talking, respond appropriately.

■ **Speak assertively, not aggressively:** Be assertive when stating your opinions but also be respectful of the opinions or thoughts of others. Attacking or ignoring other people’s opinions in favour of your own is aggressive. Being assertive is the result of self-esteem and self-confidence, so it would greatly benefit your teen if he can pick up this skill. Remember to stress the importance of respect and politeness at all times. There is absolutely no reason to have to resort to putting another person down just to get your point across.



Prepping for the Real World

These are just some ways that you help your teen improve his social skills. Other methods include getting him involved with volunteer work in the community (which is excellent for building empathy and social interaction) and also team-based sports (this has the added bonus of helping boost his physical activity level as well) such as football, futsal, or hockey to name a few.

These activities all help build his social skills, especially those related to teamwork and problem solving. There will also undoubtedly be conflicts that need to be resolved, which also provides him with good exposure to the realities of adulthood.

Lastly, don’t forget that you are your child’s role model so be sure to communicate with him in the manner that you want him to emulate. Remember that this includes the way that you communicate with other people as well!. **PP**

An educational contribution by





Positive Parenting

Malaysia's Pioneer Expert-Driven Educational Programme

Initiated in year 2000 by the Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA), the Positive Parenting programme offers experts advice and guidance by key healthcare professionals from various Professional Bodies in the field of child health, development and nutrition, teen issues as well as family wellness.

We understand the challenges parents face in raising a child and that is why we bring together expert organisations through this programme via its many activities to support you throughout your journey.

It is our vision to bridge the gap between the healthcare professionals and parents to empower you with unbiased, accurate and practical information.

Together, we can give our children the best start in life to ensure a brighter future.

Key activities of Positive Parenting

• Positive Parenting Guide:



Published quarterly, it is distributed through a network of healthcare professionals in private and government clinics and hospitals as well as selected kindergartens nationwide.

• Website:



www.mypositiveparenting.org: One-stop digital portal with hundreds of articles, recipes and easy access to paediatricians.

• Facebook:



Follow us on Facebook to gain access to the latest parenting tips and updates from the Experts.

• Talks and Seminars:

Have questions? Ask the Experts? Join us in our Positive Parenting seminars featuring some of the nation's top Parenting Experts!



• Educational press articles:



Look out for our dedicated 'Positive Parenting' columns every fortnight and monthly in Malaysia's leading English, Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese newspapers.

~ Our Collaborating Expert Partners ~



Positive Parenting is a non-profit community education initiative. Companies wishing to support us or wish to collaborate with the programme are welcome to contact the Programme Secretariat.

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