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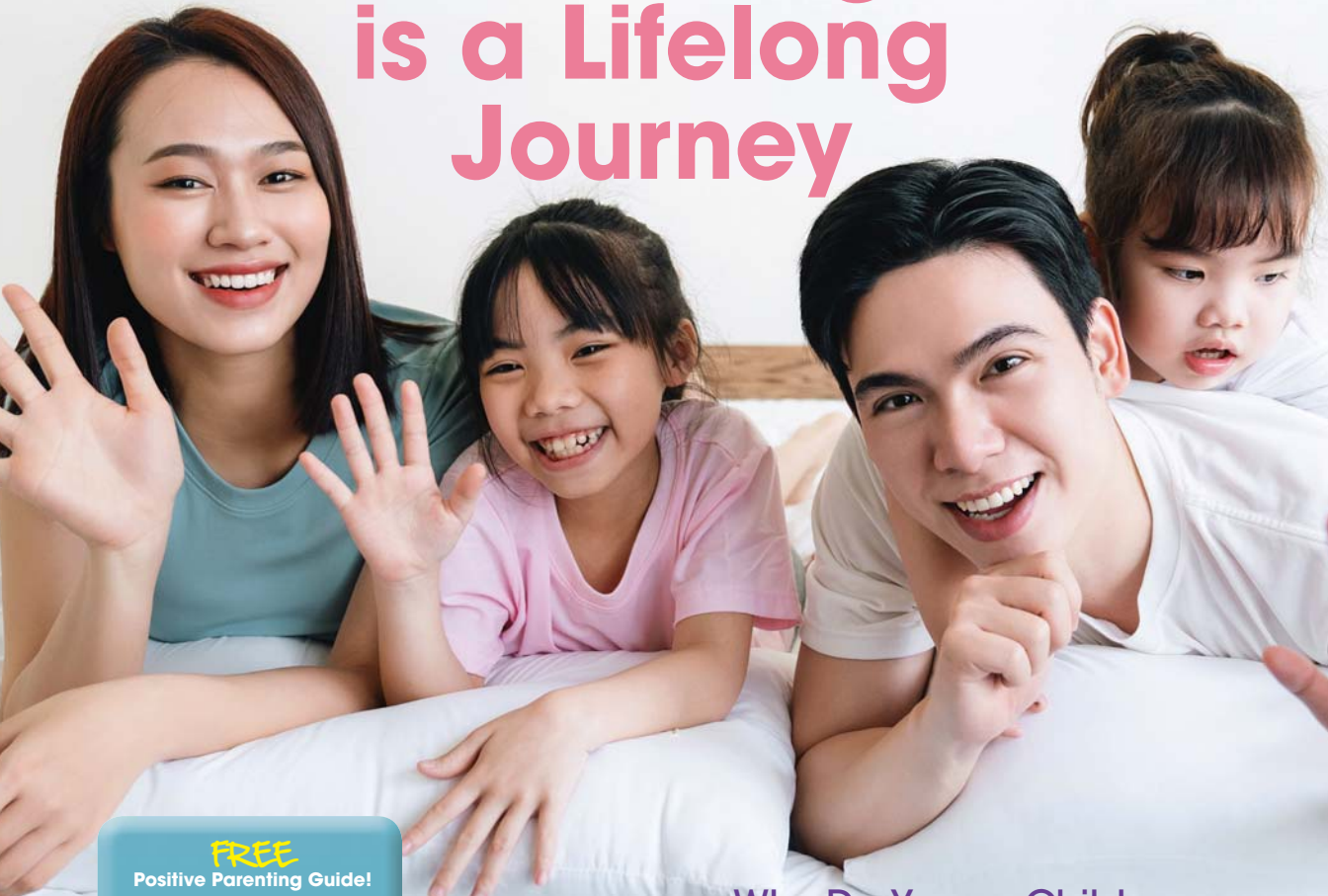
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The Official Guide Series On Maternal, Child & Family Care By The Malaysian Paediatric Association

Malaysia

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The Long Journey of Parenthood

Parenting is a lifelong journey. We don't stop becoming a parent once our children become adults. But of course, your roles and responsibilities evolve as you progress through different stages of life as a parent. The Feature section in this issue addresses this topic by interviewing four parents to see how they navigate the ups-and-downs of parenting and deal with children across different ages.

You can also read other articles in this issue discussing topics that are relevant to all parents, no matter if you are a new parent or parent with multiple children, for example, the concerns in high-risk pregnancy, the reason why young children get sick often, tips to teach food safety to children and the importance of financial education in teens.

The whole purpose of this Guidebook and articles is to help parents like you upgrade your parenting knowledge and answer any questions that you may have – hopefully we are in the right direction. You can also find past articles on other topics related to parenting, child health and healthy living on our website (mypositiveparenting.org). Remember to connect with us on Facebook (@positiveparentingmalaysia), Instagram (@mypositiveparenting), YouTube (ParentFlix) and Spotify (ParentFlix) too! You will find interesting articles and videos on these platforms.

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With **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail**, Chairman, Positive Parenting Programme, and parents, **Dr Nurul Muiz Murad**, **Lee Mei Li**, **Susan Thomas-Taylor** & **Mary Nathan**

Parenting is a Lifelong Journey

Parenting requires a lifelong commitment of constant learning and adaptation but is filled with joy and lasting memories.

Parenting is indeed a lifelong journey as the role of a parent does not end when their child reaches a certain age. As parents, you'll find that your child requires your guidance and support throughout various stages of their lives, from infancy to adulthood and beyond. Even as children navigate their own lives as adults, parents may continue to offer advice, support and love to them.

The chairman of Positive Parenting Programme, **Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail** says that in addition to providing ongoing support, parenting also involves being able to constantly adapt to new challenges and changes in your children's lives. As children grow and develop,

their needs and interests change, and parents will need to adjust their parenting style along the way. "Parenting is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach but rather a personal journey that requires ongoing learning and growth. Parents must be committed to this journey, which is challenging but can also be very beautiful and meaningful."

Positive Parenting interviewed four parents, and it's clear from their accounts that being present, doing fun things as a family, having a strong support network and working through challenging times with love and care, all add up to make the journey together as a family a healthy and happy one.

Watching them evolve

Dr Nurul Muiz Murad, 47, and his wife Jasmin Mohd Ramli, 44, have two children and live in Bandar Utama, Selangor. Nurul is a sustainability consultant and his wife works as a senior marketing executive in a GLC. Their kids, Ali Imran, 12, and Iris Soraya, 10, are in primary school.

"I am a 'full-time' father as my wife works full time. I often find it difficult to juggle my work and the children since I handle most of the logistics, which includes sending and picking them up from school and extracurricular activities, as well as cooking and cleaning the house. But they are happy kids because they have me around. I strongly believe that at least one parent should be with the kids as they are growing up because it is so important for their character development."

Nurul says that his wife and he have developed a system. "It's not difficult at all as we have been doing this since the kids were babies. My wife does a bulk of the cleaning on the weekends. I'll do the rest. The kids often help out with the chores at home too."

Nurul shares that watching his kids grow up in front of his own eyes has been one of the highlights of his parenting journey. "I have been with

them since the day they were born. And to see them develop into fine young individuals from babies, to toddlers to tweens... that has been grand. I look forward to seeing how their personalities continue to evolve as they grow older."

He is grateful that he gets support from Jasmin's family. "If I have meetings outside the house, the challenge is usually to find a babysitter. Luckily, we have our in-laws nearby. So, I will send the kids over there if I need to run out for a quick meeting with clients."



Dr Nurul Muiz and family



- If you're a stay-at-home dad, you will benefit from deciding together with your spouse what your responsibilities are going to be when it comes to taking care of the kids.
- Right from the start, you need to discuss and come to an agreement on what chores each of you will handle – everything from cooking to cleaning and doing laundry – to reduce conflict later on. Also, as much as you want to raise your children all on your own, this can lead to unhealthy levels of stress. So, for your own sanity and the happiness of your family, ask for help when you need it!

Hands-on all the way

Hailing from Petaling Jaya, **Lee Mei Li**, 39, is a stay-at-home mum with a pair of seven-year-old twins, Jacob and Joshua, and 15-month-old baby Joel.

"I think being responsible for one baby as a first-time mom is hard enough... With twins, it was just all kinds of crazy!" Lee says, reminiscing about her firstborns. "The first year was tough because sometimes you need 12 hands just to take care of two babies. It was physically exhausting caring for newborn twins, but once we created a daily routine, which we religiously stuck to despite all the nap/sleep regressions and developmental leaps, it was that much more bearable."

Lee says that while the twins are often a handful, there are a whole lot of good things that come with raising two little ones who are of the same age. "When they started school, there was little to no separation anxiety because they had each other. Whenever they fall sick, they usually do it in turns and that helps tremendously for us parents in knowing what to expect," Lee says.


When things get too stressful, Lee is grateful that she has her spouse, James Oye, to turn to. "He's the one I complain to once he comes home from



Lee Mei Li and her twins

work, and also the one who never fails to listen to me talk about the kids, no matter how tired he is at the end of the day. I am blessed that I get to be so hands-on with raising our kids and I could not do this without my husband's support."

"Now, parenting my third child alongside my two older boys, there is never a dull moment in the house – the twins have a great love for their little brother and it really warms my heart whenever they try to co-parent too."



If you're raising twins, developing routines and schedules is a great way to stay sane! A structured routine helps your children feel safe because they know what to expect next. Getting babies on the same sleep schedule, when possible, allows parents a few minutes to take a breath too. As the twin babies grow, they will also be accustomed to following a routine.

Easier the second time around

Teacher **Susan Thomas-Taylor**, 39, who spent many of her growing up years in Subang Jaya, has now settled down in Fukuoka, Japan with her Canadian husband Joel Taylor, and their toddler and baby daughters, Ziv Lucine, 3, and Thea Thomas, 1.

“When I became a mother, I knew that life was going to be very different. New schedules ruled my life and this tiny human was my boss. I enjoyed learning about all the different duties I had and I fell in love with watching my baby achieve different milestones. My whole world was flooded with more love, more smiles, more cuddles, more cries but also less partner time and less sleep for sure!”

Susan says that with her first child, everything was new and she was so fearful of everything, but quickly learned about breastfeeding, colic pains, sleep schedules, co-sleeping and baby proofing. “My daughter taught me to embrace change and adapt to survive,” she shares.

“When I was pregnant with my second child, the whole journey seemed very familiar to me. I had been down this road and was definitely more confident about this second pregnancy. Though there were real struggles with smells, sights and gestational diabetes, I was not crying about any of these things anymore.”

She says that the challenges she faces as a parent come in different sizes and volumes, which keep changing like a never-ending story. “With my three-year-old, it is one tantrum after another about a toy or food or which park we should go to... She is at a stage when she is pushing

If you are parenting little children, life can get pretty stressful. But don't fret, tell yourself that this is just a phase that will pass. It is so hard for toddlers to communicate their feelings - that is why tantrums and meltdowns are common. Help your child use words to express their feelings and set rules and limits. Most importantly, always be consistent and follow through with these rules. And don't forget to praise your child when they behave well.



Susan and her kids

the boundaries. With my one-year-old, the current struggle is that we co-sleep with her and she still wants comfort in the form of night feeds which I am desperately trying to stop!”

Susan loves watching her children explore the world around them, falling in love with different sights, sounds, colours and smells. “I very much want to help them figure out what direction their lives will take. I want to empower them to be kind and authentic in all they do. I love that as a parent I have opportunities to do these things.”

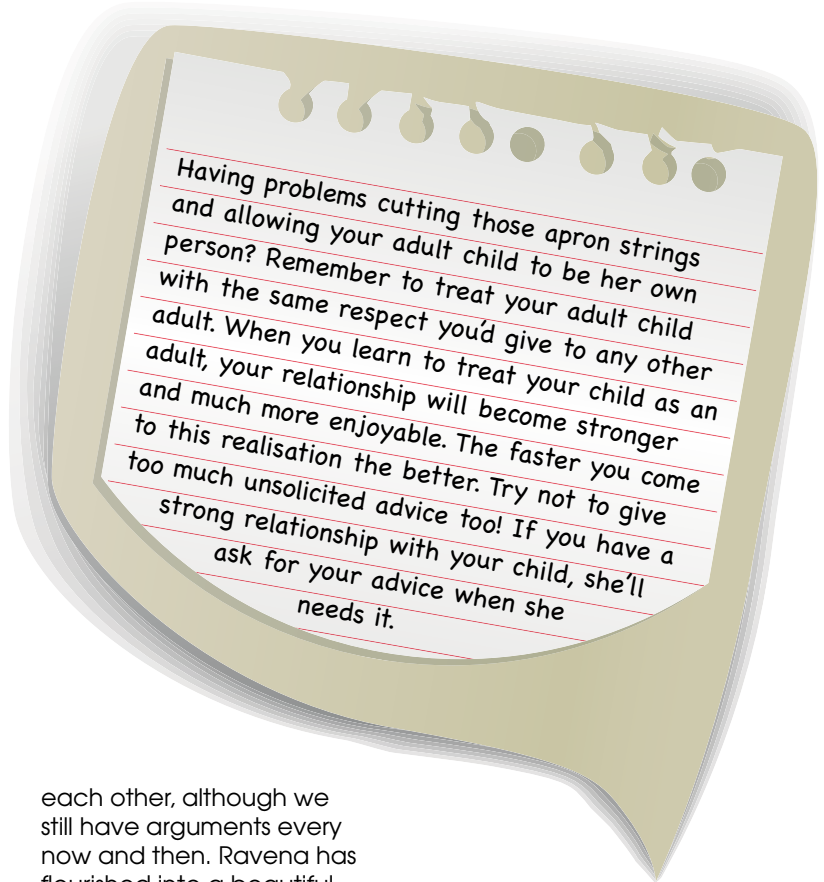


Bonding in adulthood

Retiree/single mother **Mary Nathan**, 57, from Rawang, remembers having numerous battles with her daughter Ravena, who has just turned 30. "When she was a teenager, Ravena was such a handful. We had a close relationship but that didn't stop her from being rebellious and wanting to try out many things like dyeing her hair, getting body piercings and tattoos, and going for heavy metal concerts way past her curfew!"

Mary remembers those tumultuous teen years as being the most challenging of her parenting journey. "Ravena was always very headstrong and she would insist on getting her own way. I remember having many arguments which ended with both of us in tears. And at that time, I was devastated and thought I had completely failed as a parent. I didn't know where I had gone wrong because I had spent so much time nurturing and caring for her when she was young, even though I was working a full-time job then. Even after Ravena had turned 21, I still found it hard to allow her to go ahead and live her own life without imposing my own rules."

Today, Ravena is married and has settled down. "Our relationship has really grown and we are able to get along so well as adults who respect



each other, although we still have arguments every now and then. Ravena has flourished into a beautiful, caring, headstrong and responsible young woman. We call and chat with each other frequently, we share our problems, give advice to each other and look forward to holidays when we can spend time together again. Though the path was rocky along the way, I am glad that we were able to learn and grow together."





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Can I Be A Mother If I Have A Chronic Illness?

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

Starting a family is an exciting period of life that many look forward to. In fact, many newlyweds are inclined to rush into this without knowing and understanding each other's medical status. This is a particularly important consideration before starting a family, as it may negatively impact both your own and your future child's health.

What is a High-Risk Pregnancy?

High-Risk Pregnancy: A pregnancy that poses a higher-than-normal health risk to the pregnant mother, foetus, or both. They are often seen in individuals who have chronic medical illnesses or are known carriers for certain genetic conditions.

What increases the possibility of a High-Risk Pregnancy?

- **Existing medical conditions:** Certain health conditions can negatively affect the health of your future child. These commonly stem from individuals with chronic medical illnesses or those who are known carriers for genetic conditions.
- **Age:** The risk of pregnancy complications increases the older the mother is. Generally, those who are above 35 have a higher-than-average risk of pregnancy complications.
- **Lifestyle factors:** Certain lifestyle choices may increase the risk of a high-risk pregnancy. These include drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and using drugs.

What medical conditions should be paid attention to?

Medical Conditions	Potential Negative Effects During Pregnancy
Diabetes	Birth defects, stillbirth, preterm birth, large baby at birth, risk of developing diabetes in the future, etc.
Anaemia	Preterm birth, low birth weight, and small foetal size throughout gestation
Chronic Hypertension	Foetal growth restrictions, placental abruption, preterm birth, and need for caesarean section
Heart Disease	Abnormal foetal growth, preterm birth, and development of heart symptoms in the mother (e.g. abnormal heart rate, congestive heart failure, etc.)
Epilepsy	Stillbirth, low birth weight, increased risk of seizure frequency in mother. Treatment drugs may also harm the foetus (e.g. birth defects, bleeding problems in new-born, etc.).
Chronic Kidney Diseases	Premature birth, low birth weight, difficulty in getting and staying pregnant
Autoimmune Diseases	Diseases like lupus and multiple sclerosis can increase risks during childbirth. Treatment drugs may also harm the foetus.
Thyroid Diseases	Heart failure and brain development problems in the foetus
HIV/AIDS	Passing on the HIV infection from infected mother to baby
Other infectious diseases	Various infectious diseases may be passed on from an infected mother to the child to cause serious complications. E.g. Zika virus infection may cause head deformities in the foetus, etc.
Various genetic conditions	Various genetic conditions may affect foetal development and health. E.g. Down syndrome, sickle cell disease, Klinefelter syndrome, etc.

The health status of yourself and your partner may play an influential role in the health of your future child. Understanding these potential health risks can help you make informed decisions about family planning and take the necessary precautions to prevent future health complications. Speak with your doctor to learn more about managing high-risk pregnancies. PP

What to do if you or your partner has an existing medical condition?

1) Attend pre-pregnancy care clinics

- Before trying for a baby, attend pre-pregnancy care clinics.
- These are healthcare services (available at all government health clinics) that assess and manage the health of women prior to the conception of a child.
- Services range from education to medical health screenings, and many more.

2) Speak with a healthcare provider

- To better understand the health status of yourself and your partner, speak with a doctor. Your doctor may perform some medical screening tests.

3) Take any necessary special tests

- If required, your doctor may run special tests for certain conditions. For example, genetic tests to screen for genetic conditions (amniocentesis), lab tests to detect infectious diseases, ultrasound (by qualified doctors) to detect structural problems, etc.

4) Look for pregnancy-safe treatment options

- Speak with a doctor about available options that are safe for pregnancy to control your pre-existing medical problems.

5) Ensure a stable disease condition

- Make sure that your condition is stable before attempting to get pregnant.

6) Attend prenatal appointments

- If you choose to proceed with the pregnancy, ensure that you attend your prenatal appointments.
- Expect prenatal visits to be longer and more frequent as the health of the mum and the baby will be closely monitored.

7) Address any lifestyle factors

- Avoid or reduce any lifestyle factors such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, etc.

An educational collaboration with



Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia

COVID-19 Complications in Children

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

Some children infected with COVID-19 can develop severe complications that can be detrimental to their health. Here are some known examples of COVID-19 complications in children.



Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)

What is MIS-C?

MIS-C is a rare complication of COVID-19 in children, that is characterised by the inflammation of multiple organ systems (usually two or more), like the heart, kidneys, lungs, brain, and gastrointestinal tract.

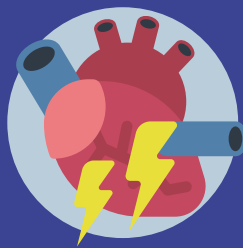
Symptoms of MIS-C

Fever, difficulty breathing, pressure or pain in the chest, pale or blue-coloured skin, light-headedness, swollen lymph nodes, skin rashes, stomach pains, diarrhoea, and vomiting.

How is it treated?

Currently, there are no specific treatments for MIS-C, but doctors usually provide supportive care and medication to reduce inflammation. Fortunately, MIS-C is not a chronic condition. Affected children are able to recover from MIS-C with proper medical attention.

Inflammation of the Heart (Myocarditis)



One of the organs that can be inflamed in MIS-C patients is the heart. The inflammation of the heart is known as **myocarditis**, which can result in symptoms

like chest pains, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeats, and fatigue. Myocarditis is particularly dangerous as it can result in damage to the heart muscles. Consequently, this can then lead to heart failure, heart attacks, or strokes. Currently, there is no specific treatment for myocarditis. It is treated with supportive care and medications to reduce inflammation.

Long COVID

What is Long COVID?

Long COVID (also known as 'Post COVID Condition') can affect any age group, including adults and children. Individuals with Long COVID experience prolonged symptoms, or even develop new ones, up to several months after being infected.

Symptoms of Long COVID

Fatigue, trouble breathing, general weakness, chest pains, coughing, depression or anxiety, heart palpitations, muscle pains, and loss of smell or taste.

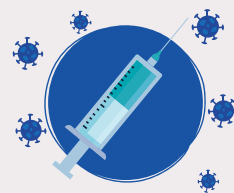
How is it treated?

There is also no single effective treatment for Long COVID. Instead, doctors focus on treating the symptoms using medications. In addition to this, specialists are often brought in to evaluate certain symptoms (e.g. children with chest pains usually see cardiologists). Fortunately, children tend to recover faster than adults.



Tips to Prevent COVID-19 in Children

As the saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". Here are some tips to prevent COVID-19 infections in children.



Practise general preventive measures.

Ensure that your child wears a mask in crowded places, avoids close contact with sick individuals, gets sufficient sleep, and stays active regularly.



Ensure personal hygiene.

Take measures to ensure good hygiene habits in your child. This includes regular hand washing and sanitising, covering their mouth/nose when sneezing or coughing, avoid touching their face, and generally keeping clean.

Stay updated on your child's vaccines!

The COVID-19 vaccination is available for children above 5 years old and can reduce the risk of developing severe disease. For those below the minimum age, other family members can provide indirect protection to the ineligible children by getting vaccinated. It is also important for children to complete all the doses in the national immunisation schedule. To learn more, speak with a paediatrician about COVID-19 vaccines.

In conclusion, COVID-19 infections are often mild in children. However, a small percentage of infected children can develop severe complications like MIS-C and Long COVID, especially those with chronic diseases or a weakened immune system. As parents, it is important that we protect our little ones as best we can. In this case, that involves understanding the potential complications and how we can play a role in preventing diseases. PP

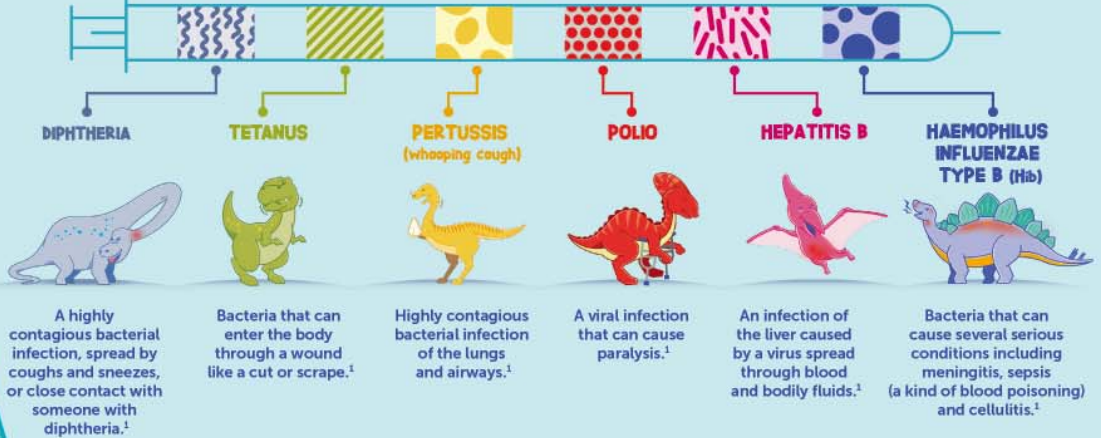
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Talk to your doctor on how to prevent infection from these diseases



References:

1. NHS UK. Vaccinations and newborn screening tests. Available at <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby/vaccinations-and-newborn-screening-tests/>. Accessed on April 2023. 2. Sanofi. Sanofi Pasteur Vaccines. Available at <https://www.sanofi.com/en/your-health/vaccines>. Accessed on April 2023.

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Delayed or Interrupted Immunisation: Don't Get Left Behind!

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

Have your children taken all their vaccination shots? Or did they miss any shots, especially during the long lockdown? Have you managed to get the catch-up doses for them? Here's what you need to know about delayed or interrupted immunisation.

Last July, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the largest sustained decline in childhood vaccinations in approximately 30 years. WHO stated that 25 million children had missed out on one or more doses of the DTP vaccine (for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) in 2021 alone, raising alarm bells about the growing number of children at risk from devastating but preventable diseases.

There are numerous reasons for this decline, including the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the lack of access to health services for children living in conflict areas and in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, harmful misinformation spread by anti-vaccine activists has also given rise to doubt about the efficacy of vaccines. WHO concluded that this continued decline has resulted in a drop in childhood immunisation for a whole generation, and this will inevitably lead to more disease outbreaks in the future.

This is indeed a cause for great concern, and as parents, we should take note of this worrying trend. Malaysia has not been spared, as there are also cases of delayed and interrupted immunisations here. It is important for parents to understand that if you choose to delay, skip, or reject vaccines, there can be risks, not just for your child, but also for others in your community.

What is delayed or interrupted immunisation?

Delayed immunisation

refers to a situation where a child's vaccination schedule is behind the recommended schedule but not missed completely, while **interrupted immunisation** refers to a situation where a child misses one or more doses of a vaccine. During the pandemic, for example, many children/infants may have missed their vaccinations due to the movement control order, or if they or someone in their family had COVID-19.

Timely vaccination is crucial to ensure that a population is fully safeguarded against vaccine-preventable diseases and sustains herd immunity. Delayed or interrupted immunisation increases the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases. It is essential to catch up on missed doses and to follow the recommended vaccination schedule to ensure adequate protection against preventable diseases.

Recognising that not all children manage to get their vaccinations on time, WHO has a **"catch-up vaccination"**

schedule for those who have had their immunisations interrupted or those who are starting out late, with detailed recommendations for all immunisations, including HepB (hepatitis B), MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis) vaccines.

Catch-up vaccination

aims to provide optimal protection against diseases to individuals who missed or has not received doses of vaccines per the national immunisation schedule by completing the schedule in the shortest and most effective time frame.



What are the consequences of missing a vaccination?

Delaying immunisation in children can result in many consequences, including increased susceptibility to vaccine-preventable diseases such as hepatitis B, pertussis and diphtheria. In worst case scenarios, these diseases can lead to serious health complications, including hospitalisation, brain damage and even death. Children who are not immunised can also spread infectious diseases to others, including people who cannot receive vaccines due to medical reasons or those who have weakened immune systems.

What should I do if my child has missed a vaccination?

Don't fret! Consult your doctor to discuss the best course of action to catch up on missed or delayed vaccinations for your child. An accelerated or catch-up vaccination schedule may be recommended to help ensure the child is fully protected against vaccine-preventable diseases as quickly as possible. Your doctor will determine what vaccines are needed based on your child's age

and medical condition, then recommend the appropriate intervals for catch-up doses, if necessary.

The consequences of delayed or interrupted immunisation in children can be serious, both for the child and for the broader community. It is therefore imperative for parents to ensure that their children receive all recommended vaccines – on

time if possible, but otherwise they can catch-up – in order to protect their health and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. PP

An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association



Influenza infections (flu) in children are often mild, and parents tend to dismiss it as a minor illness.¹ But the flu is not as benign as you may think. It can lead to devastating complications that affect more than just the respiratory system.

The Complications of Influenza and How It Affects the Body

Introduction to influenza

Influenza is a contagious viral infection that affects the respiratory system. It is commonly spread through close contact with an infected individual (via respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, etc.).²

Common symptoms in children include fever, coughing, headache, sore throat, and vomiting.² In some cases, children can develop severe complications that affect organ systems other than the lungs.

Influenza and the body's organ systems

Influenza and the heart

Influenza infections can affect blood pressure, heart rate, and

heart function.³ Although this is mainly problematic for older people with heart conditions, in rare cases it may affect children, especially those who have congenital or chronic heart conditions.³

There have been reports of influenza directly infecting the heart muscles and causing inflammation (myocarditis).⁴

Myocarditis can lead to other complications like⁵:

- Enlargement of the heart (dilated cardiomyopathy)
- Heart failure
- Abnormal heart rhythms

Influenza and the brain

Influenza infections can also affect the brain and cause many complications. These often have high fatality rates, and for those who survive these complications, there is also a high chance of developing

neurological disabilities.⁶ Here are some potential complications of influenza on the brain:

- **Influenza-Associated Encephalopathy (IAE).** Damage to the brain that can cause seizures, comas, or even death. Relative to adults, encephalopathy is more common in children between the ages of 6-18 months.⁶
- **Encephalitis.** Direct infection of the brain which causes inflammation. This can lead to brain damage, bleeding in the brain, and the destruction of the nerves.⁷
- **Guillain-Barré Syndrome.** A disorder where the body's immune system attacks itself, which can affect the nerves in our body to cause muscle weakness and paralysis.⁸

Influenza and the respiratory system

The respiratory system is the primary target for influenza viruses. This can cause various complications such as:

- **Pneumonia.** Infection in the lungs where the tiny air sacs (alveoli) become inflamed. This commonly occurs in young children, the elderly, and pregnant women. Pneumonia can affect one or both lungs.^{7,9}
- **Bronchitis.** Inflammation and irritation in the air passages of the lungs (bronchi). In severe cases, this can lead to the constriction of the blood vessels in the lungs, which can increase blood pressure.⁷
- **Sinusitis.** Inflammation of the sinuses, which can cause nasal congestion, pain near the eyes, severe headache, difficulty breathing, reduced sense of smell or taste, and neck stiffness.⁷



Influenza is a common infection across all ages. Despite the majority of cases being mild, it is important for parents to recognise that young children are one of the high-risk groups which can develop severe complications. As such, parents should understand these complications and strive to prevent influenza infections in their little ones. As parents, we are in charge of our child's health. Therefore, it is important to consult with a doctor about influenza in children, the possible complications, and take the necessary steps to ensure your child's health. PP

How to shield your little one from influenza

1) Take physical prevention measures¹⁰

- Avoid any close contact with individuals who are sick or feeling ill.
- Teach your child to practise respiratory etiquette (i.e. cover nose or mouth with a napkin when sneezing or coughing).
- Ensure that your child wears a face mask in crowded or enclosed places, especially during an outbreak.

2) Get vaccinated¹⁰

- Ensure that your child receives the influenza (flu) vaccination every year (available for those aged 6 months and above).
- Stay up-to-date with other vaccinations in the national immunisation programme, e.g. pneumococcal, MMR, etc.
- Stay up-to-date with other vaccinations, e.g. COVID-19, chickenpox, etc.
- To learn more about influenza vaccination, speak with a paediatrician.

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5 Questions on Child Physical Abuse

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

Children can suffer serious harm if they are physically abused by family members or those entrusted with the responsibility of looking after them. It is our collective responsibility to recognise the possibility of child abuse and report such instances.

1 What is child physical abuse?

- Physical abuse occurs when a parent or any person responsible for the care of a child applies a non-accidental force on a child's body and hurts the child.
- Example:
 - Hitting with bare hands or various objects
 - Slapping, pinching, punching, pushing, kicking
 - Pulling their hair or shaking the child violently
 - Causing burns with hot objects or liquids
 - Applying substances like chilli in the mouth or on the lips
 - Locking them within a confined space
 - Placing them in uncomfortable positions
 - Deliberately depriving them of food or water

2 What are some circumstances which could increase the risk of child physical abuse?

- An adult who is unable to cope with the care of a child.
- An adult under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Young and inexperienced parents.
- Presence of family members with untreated mental health conditions.
- Stress due to overwork, financial difficulties, deprivation of sleep and lack of support.

- Family quarrels that turn violent.
- Drastic change in home or family circumstances.
- Young children and children who are poorly supervised are at a higher risk.

3 What happens when children are physically abused?

- The smaller the child, the higher the risk of serious injuries.
- The most common injuries are on the skin, such as bruises, cuts or burns.
- Some children may have broken bones.
- Babies who are shaken violently or suffer blows to their head can develop internal bleeding that results in death or permanent brain damage.
- Blows to the abdomen can rupture internal organs such as the liver or intestines.
- Long-term psychological problems, e.g. anxiety, depression, learning problems, poor self-confidence, aggressive and antisocial behaviour.

4 What are the steps that we can take to prevent child physical abuse?

- Make sure your children are properly supervised.
- Know your child's caregivers. Take your baby for a check-up if he/she has bruises after returning from child care.
- Listen to children if they tell you that someone is hitting them. Don't wait until they suffer injuries.

- Build a supportive network among family, friends and neighbours.
- Don't respond in anger. Calm yourself before taking any action to correct a child's behaviour.
- Get help or counselling if you have problems, e.g. anger issues, substance abuse.

5 What should I do if I witness a child being abused?

- Make a report via:
 - Tallan Nur 15999 by Department of Social Welfare Malaysia
 - Hospital (one-stop crisis centre)
 - Police (in sexual/physical abuse cases)
- Provide details (e.g. name of the child, location, reason for suspecting abuse).
- Doctors, family members and caregivers are required by law to report the matter if they are aware that a child has been abused. PP

For a deep dive into the topic, tune in to **ParentFlix Podcast: Recognising Physical Abuse in Children** by scanning this QR code:



An educational contribution by





HEPATITIS B

A Threat to the Liver

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

In 2019, the World Health Organization estimated that 296 million people were living with chronic hepatitis B, a potentially life-threatening liver infection, with 1.5 million new infections each year. But what do we know about the disease?

Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). Despite being a global health problem that puts people at risk of cirrhosis, liver cancer, and even death, it is possible for those living with hepatitis B to manage their condition and lead a healthy life. If you, your child or any of your family members have hepatitis B, it is important to learn about the disease to know exactly what you're dealing with and how to prevent it from worsening.

How does hepatitis B spread?

Hepatitis B spreads through contact with infected blood or other bodily fluids. Most commonly, it is transmitted from a mother with hepatitis B to her baby during childbirth. It can also spread through unprotected sex with an infected person and through sharing needles or personal items that may have come into contact with infected blood or bodily fluids. It is important to know that hepatitis B does not spread by coughing, sneezing, hugging, cooking and sharing food.

Chronic hepatitis B

Chronic hepatitis B is a condition in which the HBV remains in a person's body for an extended period, typically more than six months. The younger a person is when infected with the hepatitis B virus, the greater the chance of developing chronic infection. Over time, chronic hepatitis B can cause liver damage, leading to worse problems, including cirrhosis (scarring of the liver) and liver cancer.

It's important for a patient to get regular medical care to help manage the condition and reduce the risk of complications. Chronic hepatitis B infection can be treated with medicines, including oral antiviral agents, which can reduce the incidence of liver cancer and improve long term survival. Some people may live with hepatitis B for many years before ever needing to take medications. On the other hand, people who start hepatitis B treatment may need to take medication indefinitely because these medications do not lead to a total cure.

A child with chronic hepatitis B can lead a normal life but will need regular medical monitoring. Monitoring includes serial ultrasound screenings to potentially detect liver cancer at early stage (if it happens) and liver function tests, where abnormal liver parameters may indicate that patients are entering the immunoactive phase.

At this phase, destruction of liver cells due to self-immune response may take place. Treatment may need to be started at this stage to help control the virus and prevent liver damage. As a precaution, other family members should also be tested and vaccinated.

while the HepA vaccine is recommended for people with chronic hepatitis B. It is also highly recommended to check the antibody level periodically, especially for individuals living with a chronic hepatitis B patient. If it is low, booster shots may be needed.

- **Be careful with blood/bodily fluids:** Avoid direct contact with blood and bodily fluids, and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after any potential exposure. Cover all cuts and wounds properly. Discard sanitary napkins or tampons into plastic bags.
- **Don't share personal items:** Especially items that may be exposed to blood and bodily fluids, such as razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, earrings or other piercings.
- **Be cautious when using needles:** Make sure new, sterile needles are used for ear or body piercing, tattoos and acupuncture, and proper hygiene practices are in place.
- **Practice safe sex:** People with hepatitis B should use condoms during sexual activity to reduce the risk of transmission.

What if my child has hepatitis B?

If your child has hepatitis B, it's important to get early medical care. The severity of hepatitis B can vary from person to person. Most babies and children may have mild or no symptoms since they are still in the immunotolerant phase, where the virus is present but the body doesn't mount any immune response to the replicating virus. However, if the infection persists, these symptoms may start to appear:

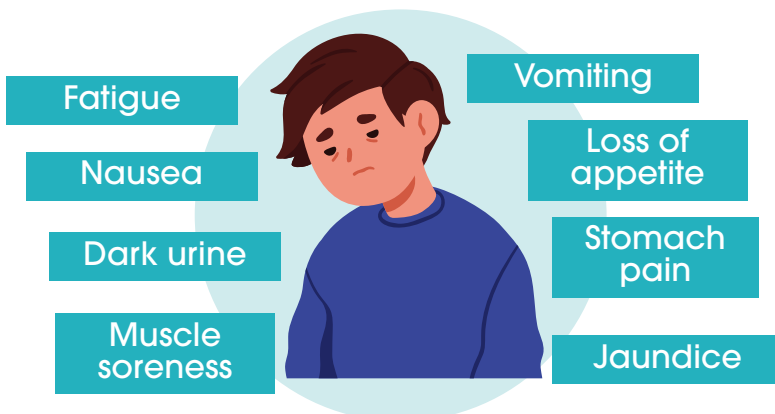
How to prevent hepatitis B?

Prevent hepatitis B infection by practising these measures:

- **Get vaccinated:** Vaccination is the best way to prevent hepatitis B. In the National Immunisation Programme, a single dose of HepB vaccine is given at birth, then as part of the 6-in-1 vaccine at 2, 3, 5 and 18 months. Protection lasts at least 20 years and is probably lifelong.

The HepB vaccine is also recommended for older children and adults who are at risk of hepatitis B infection,

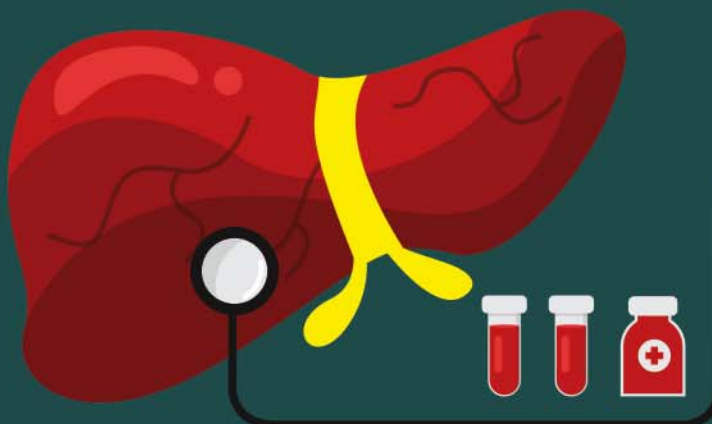
Hepatitis B typically manifests as a mild, short-term illness in the beginning. But it can significantly change one's life forever if it turns into a chronic infection, which can lead to life-threatening health problems like liver disease or liver cancer. Young children and other high-risk groups are especially vulnerable. With vaccination and other measures, you can prevent your child and family from being infected with hepatitis B. PP



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Malaysian Paediatric Association



PREVENTING HEPATITIS AS EASY AS "ABCDE"

WHAT IS HEPATITIS?¹



Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be affected.

5 MAIN HEPATITIS VIRUSES²

A B C D E

ALL THESE VIRUSES CAUSES **LIVER DISEASE**



WHEN YOU THINK OF HEPATITIS, THINK OF "ABCDE"



ANYBODY CAN GET HEPATITIS

A

THERE ARE 5 MAIN HEPATITIS VIRUSES

B

CURE IS ONLY AVAILABLE FOR HEPATITIS C³

C

DON'T FORGET TO TAKE YOUR HEPATITIS A VACCINE SHOT TODAY

D

ENSURE YOUR LITTLE ONES ARE VACCINATED WITH HEPATITIS B VACCINE

E

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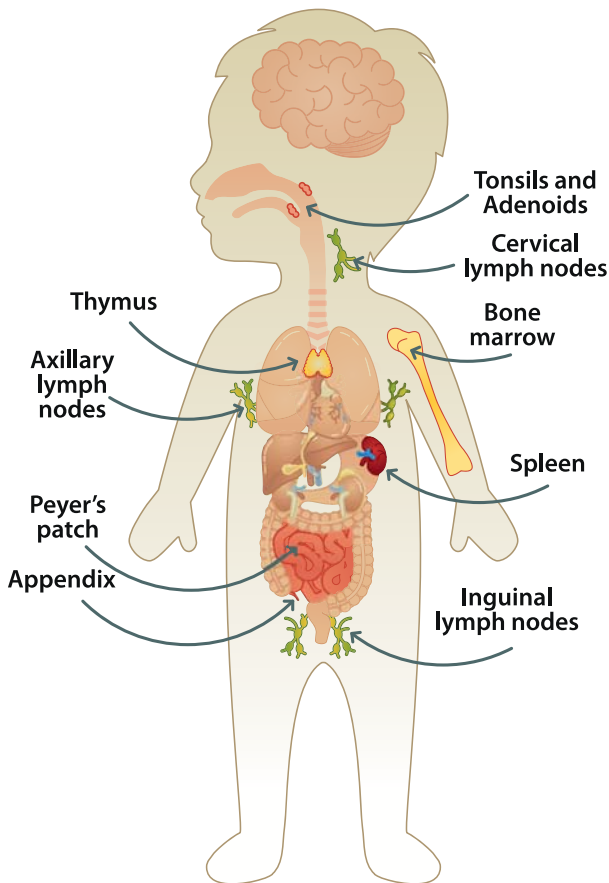
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Why Do Young Children Get Sick More Often?

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

As a parent, you must have noticed how your children tended to get sick more frequently when they were younger. On the other hand, children seemed to be less susceptible to COVID-19 when the pandemic first started. What is the explanation for this?

Immune system



Protector of the body

- The immune system is a vast network of organs, tissues, cells, proteins and chemicals that mainly functions to **protect the body against disease-causing foreign intruders** like bacteria, viruses and fungi.
- It also plays other roles such as tissue repair, wound healing, elimination of dead and cancer cells (at very early stages of cancer), and formation of healthy gut microbiota.
- Among the components are white blood cells, spleen, bone marrow, skin, stomach and gut, and many more (*refer to the diagram*).
- There are two types of immune systems:
 - The **innate immune system** responds quickly and similarly to all threats, which is why it is also called the 'nonspecific immune system'. It consists of the skin, mucous membranes, some white blood cells (i.e. phagocytes) and proteins.
 - The **adaptive immune system** responds more slowly the first time it comes into contact with a germ. But once it has identified and memorised a specific germ, it can react faster and more effectively to subsequent infections and the body becomes immune against the germ. It consists of some white blood cells (i.e. T-cells, B cells) and antibodies.

Children and illnesses

It is normal for young children like toddlers and pre-schoolers to get sick up to 8-12 times a year. As a comparison, school children may get sick 5-6 times a year, while teens and adults 2-3 times a year. Young children are more vulnerable to infections because their immune system is still immature and developing, particularly their adaptive immune system.

When children start attending day-care or preschool, they are exposed to new germs. Plus, it is easier to spread infections at these places because young children are sitting in close proximity to one another and they are not yet familiar with the proper cough/sneeze etiquette. Their habits of touching their face and putting fingers in the mouth are other contributing factors. Additionally, babies also tend to get infected when their older siblings bring germs from school to home.

However, a more responsive innate immune system in children may be a reason why children are less susceptible to COVID-19. The innate immune system of children is better and quicker at responding to new threats like COVID-19 before the virus attacks other parts of the body. Meanwhile, adults have a largely adaptive immune system and a less responsive innate immune system, so their body may take more time to fight the virus.

It is normal for young children to get sick frequently as their immune system is still developing. However, if you have concerns or suspect any underlying health problem, seek your child's doctor for advice. And take these steps to help boost your child's immunity and maintain their health. PP

Keeping your little one healthy

If your child is starting or returning to school this year, you may be worried about his/her health and immunity against germs and diseases out there. There is no easy formula to boost your child's immunity, but here are some key pointers:



- **Healthy nutrition:** A balanced and varied diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fish, lean meats, nuts and legumes is vital for a healthy immune system. Make sure to get sufficient intake of nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin D and beta-glucan, which can help to support the immune system.



- **Regular exercise:** Encourage your child to spend at least 40-60 minutes daily being physically active, e.g. by cycling, swimming, jogging, playing sports.

- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Aim for a normal weight range based on your child's age and height. You can refer to the World Health Organization's BMI-for-age charts.



- **Get enough sleep:** Toddlers and pre-schoolers need 10-14 hours of sleep including naps, while school children require 9-12 hours of sleep.



- **Manage stress:** Let your child know that they can always approach you if they have any problems or concerns. Try to spend quality time with your child regularly.



- **Practise good hygiene:** Teach your child to practise proper handwashing and good cough/sneeze etiquette. Ensure food hygiene when eating outside.

- **Get vaccinated:** Make sure that your child completes the national immunisation schedule.
- **Avoid smoking:** Exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke can cause serious and long-term health problems in children. Try to stop if you are a smoker and avoid smoking in the house.



An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association

Food Safety and Hygiene Tips for Little Ones

By **Assoc Prof Dr Cheah Whye Lian**, Nutritionist and Member of Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM)

Grocery shopping trips, food preparation and cooking can be a fun and educational experience when you get your little ones involved. This is also the best opportunity to teach and demonstrate food safety and hygiene to them! Here are some quick tips on how to teach your kids about this topic based on different situations.

Shopping trips with kids

- **Check the quality of food:** Teach your child to check the expiry date of food products and to ensure that the packaging is not damaged, dirty or dented. Food products like fruits and veggies should be fresh. Let them play the role of a food inspector who checks the quality of food.
- **Follow the right order:** The ideal sequence of grocery shopping is to get dry goods first, then soft items (e.g. fruits, veggies), and refrigerated and frozen items last. You can send older kids to fetch the items accordingly, while younger kids can help you tick off the grocery list.
- **Handle food appropriately:** Your child can help organise different types of items in the cart. For example, ask them to separate meat and seafood from fruits and vegetables. Show them how to handle different types of food, e.g. to wash their hands after handling meat and fish.

Cooking with kids

- **Give age-appropriate tasks:** Your child can help to wash, measure, stir or mix food depending on their capability. You or another adult should always be present to supervise your child and to handle hot or sharp items.
- **Dress appropriately:** Show your child the proper attire when preparing food. Wear an apron, remove any accessories (like bracelets or watches) and tie back long hair. Put on oven mitts or gloves when handling hot objects. This way your child also gets to play 'dress-up' when cooking.
- **Keep it clean:** Make sure your child washes their hands when helping you. They can help keep the countertops clean, wash fruits and vegetables, and clean up after cooking. Teach them to prevent cross-contamination by using different containers and utensils for raw and cooked ingredients.
- **Keep it safe:** Remind them to be extra careful with hot or sharp objects, and to not run or play roughly in the kitchen. Older children can help you wipe any spills immediately. Gadgets should be put away while cooking to avoid distraction.



Storing food with kids

- **Store food properly:** Tell them where to keep different types of food. For example, milk, eggs and vegetables should be kept in the fridge, while dry foods like rice, cereal and legumes should be stored in a cool, dry place at room temperature. Your child can help you store foods after shopping.
- **Know how long to keep food:** Inform your child that cooked foods or meal leftovers have to be stored in the fridge within two hours after cooking and cannot be kept longer than two days. But frozen food can be kept for three months in a standard home freezer.

When we talk about food safety and hygiene, it is not only limited to when we eat. The principles of food safety and hygiene begin in the market and continue in the kitchen, even before the food arrives on the dining table. One final tip: start by teaching your little one proper handwashing as it is one of the most important aspects of food safety and hygiene. PP

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Nurturing Healthy Coping Strategies in Your Child

By **Prof Dr Alvin Ng**, Clinical Psychologist and Founding President of the Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology (MSCP)

As parents, it is our responsibility to provide the best possible foundation for our child's future. Coping strategies are an essential pillar to this foundation and teaches them the skills they will need to handle life's challenges.

What are coping strategies?

Coping strategies are a range of mental and behavioural techniques or tools for managing reactions to stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions. These reactions are not just

emotional but also physiological, cognitive and behavioural. As such, coping is not just about emotion regulation but also about thinking skills and adaptive behaviour skills.

Why are coping strategies important in children?

Life gets more complicated as we grow up. Children require healthy coping mechanisms as they develop into adulthood so that they can better survive various challenges in life. It is even more pressing in recent years for children to be resilient given global reports of a significant rise in psychological problems among children and teenagers. Research shows that poor coping of adverse childhood experiences may lead to a higher risk of developing psychological disorders as teenagers or adults.

Unhealthy vs healthy coping strategies

There are numerous different coping strategies we use to deal with problems and stressors, some healthier than others. Yes, coping styles can be unhealthy, too!

Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Actions taken to deal with our problems that maintains distress leading to psychological (and sometimes physical) harm. In some cases, these can provide instant but temporary relief from a stressor, which may be harmful in the long run. These coping strategies tend to be emotion-focused.

Examples of unhealthy coping strategies:

- Rumination or overthinking about negative emotions may seem like a way to figure out a solution but is so repetitive and unending that it becomes both

mentally and physically tiring to the point of depression

- Explosive emotional expression such as shouting or hitting a pillow. Escalating emotions is counterintuitive to coping calmly. It can be physically harmful as well.

Healthy Coping Strategies

Actions taken to regulate our emotions that promote beneficial outcomes such as addressing

problems. These are generally problem-focused coping strategies that work on identifying problems and actively finding solutions for them. In some cases, such coping strategies may not provide instant relief from the stressor, but in the long run, will be of immense help to reduce stress and anxiety.

Healthy coping strategies allow children to accept their emotions

and learn that active problem solving can help reduce their distress more effectively than to just focus on their emotions. However, some emotion-focused coping can be helpful but tend to be short-term. These include distraction exercises such as relaxation, entertainment, physical exercise and engaging in a hobby. As a whole, problem-focused strategies are more efficient.

Examples of Coping Strategies	
Healthy Coping Strategies	Unhealthy Coping Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relaxation exercises ● Exercise / Physical activities ● Short-term distraction to calm down ● Active problem-solving ● Identify resources for help ● Speaking to someone about finding solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social isolation/withdrawal ● Repression of feelings ● Toxic positivity e.g., dismissing negative emotions and forcing positivity ● Aggression ● Excessive screen time / entertainment ● Blaming self / others ● Substance use

Tips to facilitate healthy coping strategies in your child

- **Start early.** Teaching your child to address problems using healthy coping strategies early reduces their chances of having trouble managing their emotions, behaviours and thoughts when they get older.
- **Teach your child to identify emotions.** Children who are familiar with emotions are better at regulating them. Help your child understand how their emotions come about and how they can be changed. Once they are more familiar with the causes and conditions of their emotions, they get better at regulating emotions themselves. Children who are able to communicate about how they feel are more likely to get proper help with problems.
- **Lead by example.** Be aware of your own coping strategies. The coping strategies that you use can influence the coping strategies your child picks up.

Therefore, it is important for parents to be a role model and practise healthy coping strategies around your child. Feel free to also express negative emotions because they are natural and your child is bound to feel them in life. Normalising emotions can be a tremendous help in your child's understanding of emotion regulation.

- **Focus on progress, not punishment.** Create a home environment that encourages and facilitates the development of healthy coping strategies, rather than punishing unhealthy ones. This can include acknowledging your child's feelings, working with him on seeking solutions to problems, and praising them for being resourceful.
- **Be aware of unhealthy coping strategies.** If you spot your child exhibiting any unhealthy coping strategies (e.g. avoidance, denial, self-blame), it would be helpful

to intervene and provide the necessary training for them to learn more efficient and effective methods.

Remember, coping is not just about emotion regulation. It's also about how we think and behave. Helping your child connect their thoughts and beliefs to their behaviours and emotions can provide them with a sense of mastery of themselves as they grow up. Problem-solving behaviours form effective coping strategies that are essential in life. Instilling healthy coping strategies in children early on does not just reduce risks of psychological disorders in adulthood, but also encourages them to thrive with resilience. PP

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Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology

Raising Financially Savvy Teens

By **Dr Thiyagar Nadarajaw**, Senior Consultant Paediatrician & Adolescent Medicine Specialist

Early financial education is important to equip your children with good money management skills before entering adulthood. This may start when you first give them allowances or pocket money, or even earlier. As they become teenagers, more facets of financial education need to be covered.

Here are some tips to raise a financially savvy teen:

Budgeting

- **Start with a regular allowance.** Having a consistent income allows your teen to better understand their financial behaviours and be more aware of their spending and budgetary limitations. This will help them to manage their salaries when they start working.
- **Understand “needs” vs “wants”.** Teach them how to differentiate the two types of spending. For example, a decent laptop to do their school projects is a *need*, but a top-of-the-line desktop with latest gaming features is a *want*.
- **Plan and track spending.** Show them how to keep a record of all the money they receive and spend every day. Suggest an easy and suitable way to track their spending, e.g. via apps or online tools. It may be difficult in the beginning, but over time it will become a habit.
- **Discuss money matters openly.** Include them in family conversations about money. Explain the reasoning behind your financial decisions. This way, they will be able to adopt it in their lives too.

Saving

- **Open an account.** Help your teen to open a bank or savings account if they don't have one yet. Having their own bank account will give them a sense of independence and responsibility over their finance. Check if there's any age limit before opening an account for your teen.
- **Focus on saving, not spending.** Instead of highlighting material goals and achievements like houses, cars and gadgets, share your saving goals and money management strategy with your teen.
- **Make it a habit.** Help your teen to save regularly. There are many tips to save money that they can apply. For example, a popular trend is to save any RM5 banknotes (or other values) every time they receive one.



Protecting

- **Beware of scams.** Teach your teen how to detect scam attempts and alert them of any latest tricks used by scammers. Tell them to inform you as soon as possible if they suspect anything suspicious.
- **Protect gadgets from being hacked.** Make sure their computers, tablets and smartphones are protected against viruses and malwares. They should also use strong passwords to protect their accounts and keep their gadgets updated.
- **Beware of identity theft.** Tell them to be cautious when sharing/providing personal details. Don't simply share any sensitive details (e.g. MyKad, passport, bank account) online or to any unknown third party.



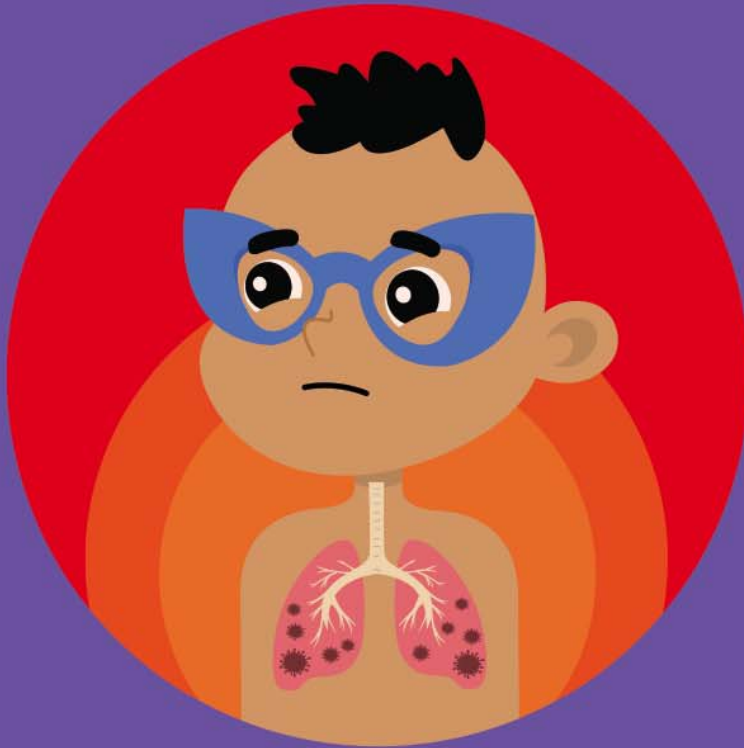
An educational contribution by

These are just some basic tips to get your teen started. When they are ready, you can also talk to them about other aspects of financial education, e.g. insurance, loans, credit cards, investments and taxes. With these skills and knowledge, your teen will be prepared to face the “real world” in future. PP



Malaysian Paediatric Association

Did you know?



PNEUMONIA IS THE **3RD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH** IN CHILDREN BELOW FIVE YEARS OLD

PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE IS PREVENTABLE

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Reference: AA.Shafie et al. / Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics (2020) 19



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Positive Parenting

Malaysia



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

We understand the challenges parents face in raising a child, and 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

Positive Parenting Guide



Published quarterly, it is distributed through healthcare professionals in private and government clinics and hospitals, selected kindergartens and confinement centres nationwide, and designated retail partners in Klang Valley.

Website



Our one-stop digital portal with hundreds of articles, infographics, recipes and our E-Guide version.

Social Media

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to gain access to the latest parenting tips, videos, infographics and updates.



ParentFlix

We are now on YouTube and Spotify as ParentFlix! Watch our educational videos and tune in to our informative podcasts on these two platforms.



Joys of Parenting

Participate in our forums, dialogues and seminars – whether online or face-to-face. And don't miss out on our contests and giveaways – awesome prizes are up for grabs!



Educational Press Articles

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



~ Our Collaborating Expert Partners ~



Nutrition Society of Malaysia



Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia



Malaysian Psychiatric Association



Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology



Malaysian Mental Health Association



National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia



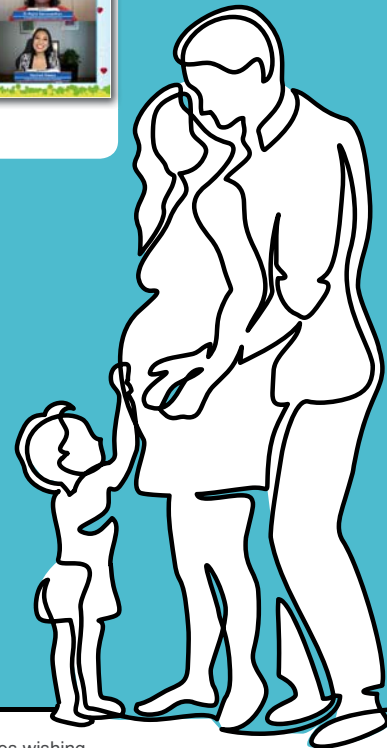
Malaysian Association of Kindergartens



Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia



Malaysian Association of Paediatric Dentistry



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.

Tel: 03 56323301 E-mail: parentcare@mypositiveparenting.org Website: www.mypositiveparenting.org

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