

Positive Parenting

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

Malaysia

The ABCs of Immunity

Turning Toddlers' Tantrums into **Teamwork**

Common Tooth Injuries:
A Guide for Parents

The Power of Music and Arts
in Nurturing Young Minds

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Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail

Chairman, Positive Parenting Management Committee and Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist



“Parental awareness and education is vital in raising healthy children.”



Dato' Dr Musa Mohd Nordin
Honorary Treasurer, MPA and Consultant Paediatrician & Neonatologist



Dr Mary Joseph Marret
Consultant Paediatrician



Dr Rajini Sarvananthan
Consultant Developmental Paediatrician



“Healthy eating habits and active living habits must be inculcated from young.”



Dr Tee E Siong
Nutritionist and President, NSM



Dr Roseline Yap
Nutritionist and Hon. Treasurer, NSM



“A healthy pregnancy gives your baby a good start in life.”



Dato' Dr H Krishna Kumar
Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist and Past President, OGSM



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



Dr Yen Teck Hoe
Consultant Psychiatrist



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



Dr Serena In
Clinical Psychologist and EXCO Member, MSCP



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



En Hairil Fadzly Md. Akir
Deputy Director-General (Policy), LPPKN



“Mental health and resilience starts with the family.”



Dato' Dr Andrew Mohanraj
Consultant Psychiatrist & President, MMHA



“Ensuring bright smiles for our children begins with early dental care and positive oral health habits.”



Dr Nabihah Dzairuddin
Paediatric Dental Specialist & Secretary, MAPD



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



Pn Anisa Ahmad
President, PPBM



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



Ms Eveleen Ling
Chairman, PTM



“A happy healthy family leads to a happy healthy society.”



Dr Norsiah Ali
President, AFPM



“When your child is having a problem, stop, listen, then respond to the need, not the behaviour.”



Datin Prof Dr Mariani Md Nor
President, ECCE Council

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Understanding the Immune System

Taking care of our children's health is often our top priority as parents. We get distressed when they show even a little sign of sickness. But do you know why and how they got sick in the first place? And how you can prevent them from getting sick? To better understand health and illness, and how we can maintain our children's health, we have to learn about the immune system.

Hence, Positive Parenting is focusing on the immune system in this issue's Feature to help parents understand the immune system and ways to boost our children's immunity. Additionally, other important parenting topics were also discussed by our line-up of credible experts. These include steps to deal with toddlers' tantrums, different types of tooth injuries, and benefits of music and arts on child development.

Hopefully, these informative and easy-to-read articles will help you navigate the topsy-turvy world of parenting. You can also visit our website (www.mypositiveparenting.org) to check out various other parenting topics from past issues. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook (@positiveparentingmalaysia), Instagram (@mypositiveparenting), YouTube (ParentFlix), and Spotify (ParentFlix) for more cool contents and latest updates!

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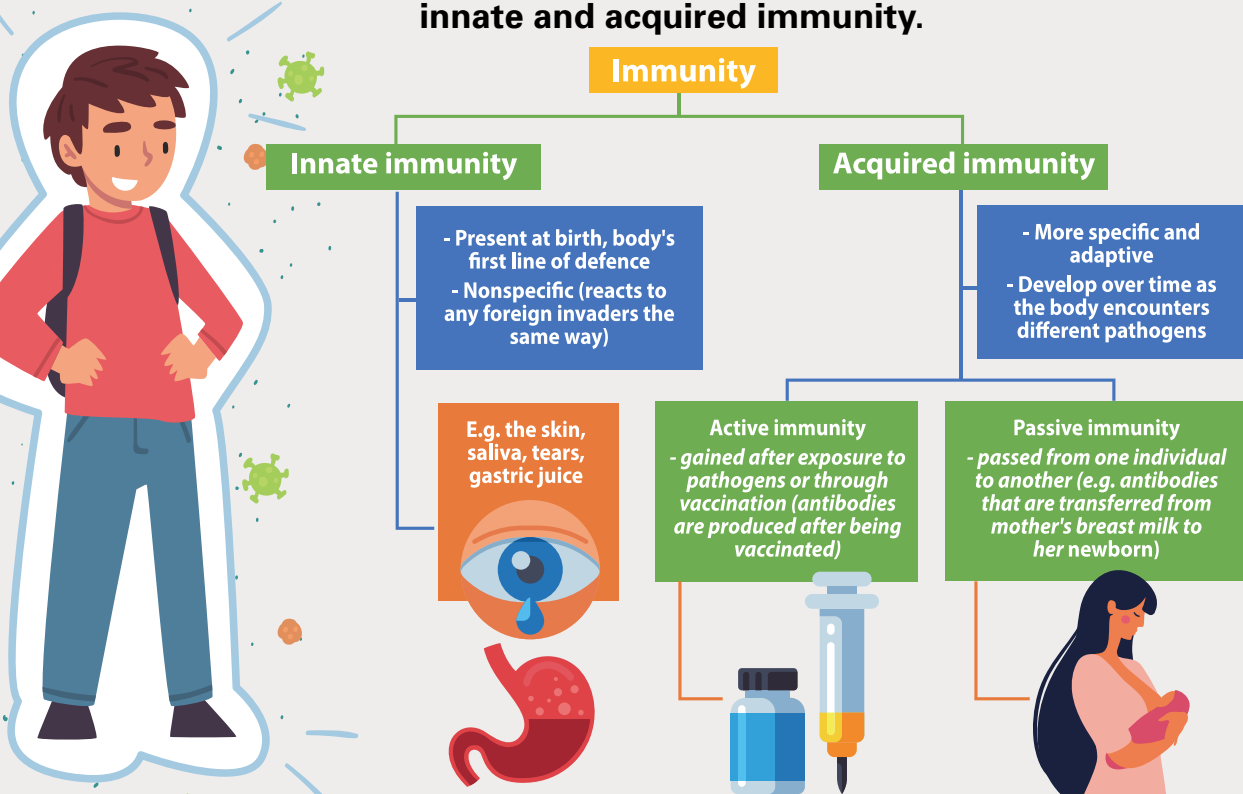
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Discover your **child's immune system!**

Immunity

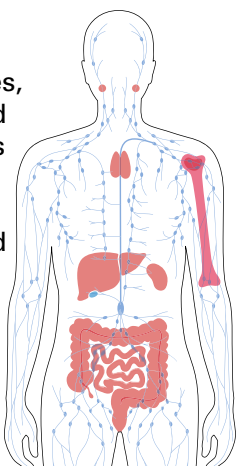
Refers to the body's ability to defend itself against harmful pathogens, e.g. bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.

The immune system is comprised of two main types of immunity: **innate and acquired immunity.**

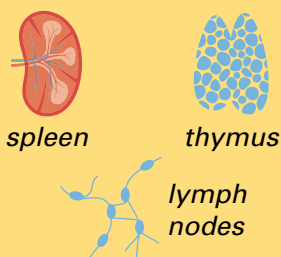


The immune system

A complex network of cells, tissues, organs, and metabolites that works closely to identify and kill harmful pathogens.



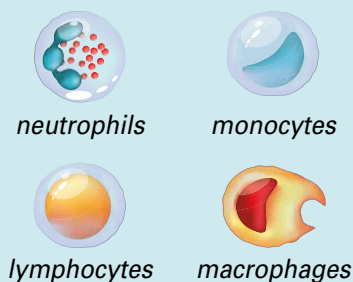
Examples of immune organs



Roles of immune organs

- Filtering pathogens
- Producing immune cells
- Coordinating immune responses

Examples of immune cells



Roles of immune cells

- Central players in the immune system
- Identifying and attacking bacteria and viruses
- Cleaning up damaged tissue

The ABCs of Immunity

Let's hear it from our experts!



Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail,
Consultant
Paediatrician &
Paediatric Cardiologist

“

Understanding the basics of immunity is essential for every parent. When parents understand how immunity works, they can feel more at ease as their child explores and learns, knowing their child's immune system is well-equipped to protect them, especially when all the necessary steps to safeguard it have been taken.

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From the moment your child wakes up, they unknowingly come into contact with germs that can easily enter their bodies as they share snacks, hug their friends, or touch contaminated surfaces. Depending on the strength of their immune system and how mature it is, these pathogens can multiply and bring about a variety of clinical symptoms ranging from mild to severe.

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Since children's immune systems are still developing, they are more vulnerable to infections, making it all the more important for parents to understand how immunity works, ways to support it, and how to recognise potential health risks that may affect their child.

”



Dato' Dr Musa Mohd Nordin,
Consultant
Paediatrician &
Neonatologist

“

A child's immune system differs significantly from that of an adult in that it is still underdeveloped and has a slower response time. Since their immune systems are not yet fully mature, children are at a higher risk of contracting illnesses, and their bodies may struggle to eliminate pathogens as effectively as adults, often resulting in more pronounced symptoms.

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A strong immune system in children offers numerous benefits by providing vigorous protection against a wide range of pathogens, thus preventing dangerous infectious diseases. Moreover, a well-functioning immune system enables the production of memory cells, which help the body mount a quicker and more effective immune response upon subsequent exposures to the same pathogens.

”

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A well-functioning immune system leads to fewer sick days, reduced hospitalisations, and fewer complications from both acute and chronic diseases, even reducing the risk of death in some cases. As a result, children are also less likely to miss school due to illness, allowing them to engage fully in learning without frequent setbacks.

”

Stronger immunity for better health

6 steps to optimal immune system

Enhance your child's ability to fight infections by practising these habits!

1. Breastfeed your child

Practise exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life.



2. Ensure a well-balanced diet

Provide diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants to support the optimal functioning of their immune system.



3. Keep them active

Incorporate safe and age-appropriate exercises and physical activities into playtime, e.g. playground activities, dancing.



4. Complete their immunisation schedule

Protect children from life-threatening diseases like pertussis, measles, tetanus, and pneumococcus.



5. Get sufficient sleep

Younger children need more sleep (up to 16 hours including naps for infants) for a healthy immune response.



6. Manage stress

Spend quality time with your child and listen to their problems. Don't burden them with too many activities.



Boost the immune system through good nutrition

A well-balanced diet provides essential nutrients needed for overall growth and to strengthen body's defence. Don't neglect these foods:

Protein foods and healthy fats



- Protein is essential for the growth and repair of tissues, and it is also the building blocks of antibodies and enzymes.
- Healthy fats such as omega-3 fatty acids help reduce inflammation and support the functioning of immune cells.

Carbohydrate foods



- Whole grains, legumes, and starchy vegetables provide complex carbohydrates that offer steady energy, preventing blood sugar spikes.
- These foods also contain fibre to promote gut health, a critical component of the immune system.

Superfoods



- Superfoods consist of vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, and probiotics, which are beneficial for our health in general.
- Include "superfoods" as part of a balanced, varied diet. It is important to note that they do not include products or supplements

Probiotic- and prebiotic-rich foods



- Probiotics in fermented foods introduce beneficial bacteria to the gut, while prebiotics in fibre-rich foods help nourish these beneficial bacteria.
- A balanced gut microbiome can strengthen the immune system by improving digestive health and preventing the entry of pathogens into the bloodstream.

Support your child's immune system

What our experts say...



Dr Roseline Yap,
Nutritionist &
Honorary Treasurer,
Nutrition Society of
Malaysia

“

The role of a **well-balanced diet** must not be underestimated in supporting the development of a child's immune system and overall growth. The **right proportions of nutrients** not only help strengthen the body's defence but also aid in maintaining optimal health.

”

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Breastfeed from the start. Through breast milk, a mother can pass down essential nutrients and antibodies to her infant, which help protect them from childhood infections. These antibodies are crucial in providing passive immunity, offering the baby a shield from harmful pathogens they may encounter.

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Good diet supplies key nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, and iron that are crucial for the production and functioning of white blood cells, which play a key role in fighting infections. Additionally, **antioxidants** found in fruit and vegetable help neutralise harmful free radicals that could impair immune cells.

”

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Get them moving! **Physical activities** have been shown to increase the production of white blood cells, which are the body's primary defence against harmful pathogens. Physical activity is also crucial for maintaining energy balance and keeping a healthy body weight. An unhealthy body weight is a factor that can impair the immune function.

”



Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail,
Consultant
Paediatrician &
Paediatric Cardiologist

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Make sure your child completes all the **vaccinations** recommended under the National Immunisation Programme (NIP) and consider additional vaccines such as those for rotavirus, influenza, and chickenpox for added protection. Vaccines help prime the immune system by stimulating it to produce an immune response to specific pathogens without causing the illness itself.

”

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Children need more hours of sleep. **Restful sleep** helps repair and regenerate immune cells, keeping the system strong and ready to defend against threats. Conversely, chronic stress – whether from challenges at home or school – can weaken immunity, especially after the prolonged rise of stress hormones like cortisol.

”

“

To ensure the optimal functioning of the immune system in keeping children healthy, it is essential to adopt **healthy habits and practices** starting from home, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, sufficient sleep, hygiene practices, and timely vaccination. Understanding and incorporating these practices into a child's daily routine can significantly enhance their ability to fight off infections.

”

Key takeaways

- Understanding and supporting the immune system through a balanced approach to nutrition, exercise, sleep, and timely vaccinations are essential in ensuring your child's well-being.
- As parents, taking these steps will not only protect your child from immediate threats like infections but will also lay the foundation for a lifetime of strong immunity.
- By prioritising these practices, parents can help their child grow into a resilient and healthy individual, ready to face the world and all of its hidden threats.



Turning Toddlers' Tantrums into Teamwork

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

Tantrums are outbursts of anger and frustration commonly seen in children between one and three years. They happen when young children are upset but do not have words to communicate their feelings. During a tantrum, a child may scream, cry loudly, stiffen the body, move the arms, kick, push, throw objects, lie on the floor, or have breath-holding episodes.

Tantrums are a normal phase of growing up as children encounter new and unfamiliar experiences. It is important to remember that toddlers do not have tantrums on purpose to annoy their parents. They need guidance and support to learn how to manage strong emotions.

A tantrum could happen when a child does not get what they wish for, e.g. another child takes the toy that they want. Children are more likely to have tantrums when they are hungry, tired, or feeling unwell. Overstimulation of the senses with too much sound, lights, or being in a crowded environment for a prolonged period can also trigger tantrums.

Here are some tips on how to cope and support toddlers through this phase:

1. Establish routines, rules and limits

Having regular routines helps children know and accept that activities they enjoy and those they dislike are part of every day. Have clear, simple, and reasonable rules and limits about what is allowed and not allowed. It will take them a while to learn, so be consistent. Praise them when they remember. And remind them gently when they forget.



2. Be a good role model

Children learn best by imitating the behaviour of adults around them. Set a good example by displaying polite, kind, and gentle behaviour that you want them to follow. If they regularly see you shouting and behaving rudely when you are upset or angry, they will imitate this behaviour.

3. Help children recognise their emotions

As your child grows, keep using words like “happy”, “sad”, “hungry”, “pain”, “tired” when you see them go through these experiences. This helps them to recognise different emotions, connect them with words, and improve their ability to communicate.



4. Prevent and manage triggers

Young children need regular breaks. Make sure your child has rested and had something to eat before going out. Pay attention to these needs when there is a change of routine, e.g. during trips or gatherings. Respond to signals showing they are hungry, sleepy, bored, or feeling unwell. Be ready to leave early or take your child out for a break before they become upset.

5. Redirect



Your child may be too young to understand why you may have to say “no” to something that is unsuitable or unsafe. When you say “no”, be ready to shift their attention to something else that is interesting or offer an alternative. For example, if your child wants to play with a knife, say “This isn’t safe to play with, but let’s get your blocks instead.”

6. Stay calm and patient

If your child throws a tantrum, stay calm and try to help them calm down. Offer comfort by holding your child gently. If necessary, carry your child to a quiet, safe place. Speak softly and acknowledge that they are upset. Allow your child to calm down gradually. When they have settled down, give them a hug. A drink, snack, or nap may help them feel better too.



7. Communicate with your child

Once your child is in a better mood, ask what made them upset. Listen to their thoughts and teach them how to ask politely instead of shouting. Explain that some things they request may not be possible and ask them to suggest an alternative. For example, ask them “You can’t watch a movie tonight, but what would you like to do after dinner?”

8. Teach your child about consequences

Let your child know that there will be consequences to their behaviour. These have to be consistent and immediate to help them learn. For example, if they refuse to tidy up, explain that their toys will be put away for the rest of the day. Make sure that you follow through, gently but firmly.



Tantrums: do’s and don’ts

Do’s	Don’ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Be patient and continue with a consistent and calm response.✓ Take your child to a quiet place to calm down.✓ Use strategies that help your child calm down.✓ Acknowledge their feelings and help to soothe their emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Do not give in to your child’s demands when they throw tantrums.✗ Do not expect tantrums to disappear immediately.✗ Do not shout at your child in the middle of a tantrum.✗ Do not respond angrily.

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Common Tooth Injuries: A Guide for Parents

By **Dr Nabihah Dzaruddin**, Paediatric Dental Specialist & Secretary, Malaysian Association of Paediatric Dentistry

Children are naturally curious and active, which unfortunately makes them prone to injuries, including those affecting their teeth. Tooth injuries can be distressing for both children and parents, but understanding the types of injuries, their treatment, and how to prevent them can help manage these situations effectively.

Types of tooth injuries in children

Tooth injuries in children can range from minor to severe, affecting both primary (baby) teeth and permanent teeth. Here are some of the most common types:

- **Chipped or fractured tooth:** This occurs when a tooth's enamel or dentin is damaged, often due to a fall or blow to the mouth. The severity can vary, from a small chip to a more significant fracture.
- **Loose tooth:** A tooth may become loose due to trauma, affecting the supporting structures. This can happen to both primary and permanent teeth.
- **Dislodged tooth:** This occurs when a tooth is pushed out of its normal position, either partially (luxation) or completely (avulsion). Avulsion, where the tooth is completely knocked out, is a dental emergency.

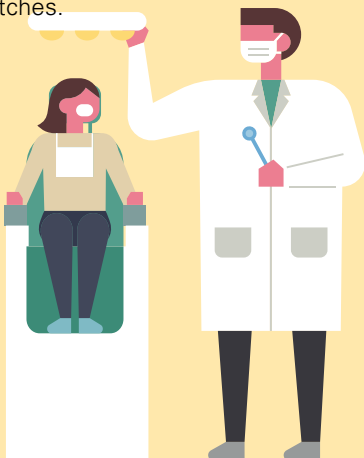


- **Intrusion:** This happens when a tooth is pushed into the gum line, often appearing shorter than usual.
- **Soft tissue injuries:** These involve injuries to the gums, lips, or tongue, often occurring alongside tooth injuries.

Treatment and management

The treatment for a tooth injury depends on the type and severity of the injury, as well as the child's age and the affected tooth (primary or permanent). Here are some common approaches:

- **Chipped tooth:** Minor chips may only require smoothing of the rough edges. More significant fractures may need a filling or bonding to restore the tooth's shape and function.
- **Loose tooth:** If a primary tooth is loose, the dentist may recommend monitoring it or extracting it if it's very loose or interfering with eating. **For a loose permanent tooth,** the dentist may try to stabilise it with a splint or wires.
- **Dislodged tooth:** For a luxated tooth, the dentist will reposition it and may use a splint to hold it in place. **In the case of an avulsed permanent tooth, prompt action is crucial.** If possible, rinse the tooth and try to place it back in the socket. If not, store it in fresh milk or the child's saliva and get to a dentist immediately. The sooner the tooth is replanted, the higher the chances of success.
- **Intrusion:** Treatment for an intruded tooth depends on the severity and the type of tooth. The tooth may be left to re-erupt on its own, or the dentist may need to reposition it surgically.
- **Soft tissue injuries:** Minor cuts and bruises usually heal on their own. More severe lacerations may require stitches.



Prevention of tooth injuries

While accidents can happen, many tooth injuries can be prevented with some precautions:

- **Childproofing:** Make sure your home is safe for children, especially toddlers who are learning to walk. Cover sharp corners, secure loose rugs, and keep stairs clear. Choose playgrounds with a soft flooring such as rubber mats or other durable materials to absorb shock from falls.
- **Sports safety:** Encourage your child to wear mouthguards during sports activities, especially contact sports like football, hockey, and basketball.
- **Car safety:** Always use appropriate car seats and seatbelts for children of all ages.
- **Oral hygiene:** Maintaining good oral hygiene can help keep teeth strong and less prone to injury. Encourage regular brushing and flossing.
- **Awareness:** Teach your child about the importance of being careful when playing and participating in activities that could lead to falls or blows to the mouth.



When to see a dentist

It's important to see a dentist as soon as possible after any tooth injury, even if it seems minor. Prompt treatment can prevent complications and improve the chances of a successful outcome. Seek immediate dental attention if:

- A tooth is knocked out or significantly dislodged.
- There is significant bleeding or swelling in the mouth.
- The child is in severe pain.
- You suspect a tooth fracture or other serious injury.



Remember, a healthy smile is an important part of a child's overall well-being. By understanding the types of tooth injuries, their treatment, and how to prevent them, you can help protect your child's smile and ensure they have a healthy and happy childhood. PP

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Fight Doubt, Vaccinate with Confidence!



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

Have you ever heard of any vaccine-related concerns or issues from friends or online? Has this affected your perception and confidence in vaccines? This could lead to vaccine hesitancy and may have a larger impact on public health.

While scrolling your social media feeds, sometimes you may find random comments about how vaccines can cause certain diseases or how vaccination is a hidden agenda by certain entities. These comments could affect readers' perception of vaccine, resulting in vaccine hesitancy. In fact, due to the risk of infectious disease resurgence, vaccine hesitancy has been included in the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of global health threats in 2019.

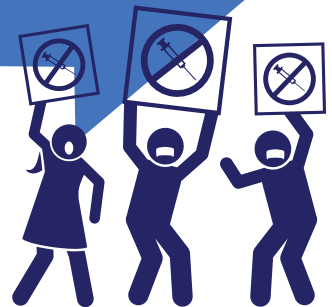
Vaccine confidence

- The belief in the safety, effectiveness, and importance of vaccines
- Comes from accurate information, trust in HCPs, positive experiences with vaccination, etc.

Vaccine hesitancy

- The reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines
- Due to misinformation, fear, and mistrust

To fight vaccine hesitancy, it is crucial to promote vaccine confidence in the population, especially among parents, since they are the ones who decide to vaccinate their children or not. As parents, you have to be aware of this issue and equip yourself with the right knowledge about vaccines, so that you are not influenced by fake news and misinformation.



Why people may hesitate to take vaccines?

• **Misinformation and conspiracy theories:**

The spread of false or misleading information about vaccines through social media and other channels can erode public trust in vaccination. One example is the false theory that the MMR vaccine causes autism, which actually has been disproven by many studies.

• **Personal beliefs and values:**

Cultural, religious, or philosophical beliefs can influence attitudes toward vaccination. For example, some individuals may be concerned about the permissibility of vaccine in Islam. According to the Mufti of Federal Territory's Office and most Islamic scholars, vaccines are permissible (harus) in Islam as long as it is made using halal, clean, and pure materials.

- **Lack of trust in authorities:** Individuals who distrust healthcare providers, government agencies, or pharmaceutical companies are more likely to be vaccine hesitant.

- **Complacency:** In communities with high vaccination rates and low disease prevalence, individuals may become complacent about the need for vaccination.

What could be the negative impact of vaccine hesitancy?

- **Disease resurgence:** Declining vaccination rates can lead to outbreaks of preventable diseases like measles, diphtheria, polio, and pertussis, causing serious illness, disability, and even death.



- **Weakened herd immunity:** Herd immunity is weakened when vaccination rates decline, putting even vaccinated individuals at increased risk of infection.

- **Increased healthcare costs:** Outbreaks of preventable diseases place a significant financial burden on families and the healthcare systems.



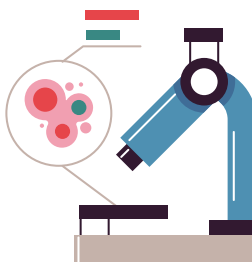
- **Prolonged pandemic:** Vaccine hesitancy can hinder efforts to control pandemics.



Vaccine is safe and effective!

There are strict and comprehensive procedures that are in place to ensure the safety and efficacy of vaccines before and after they are approved for public use. Here are the reasons you should be confident in vaccines:

- **Rigorous testing:** Vaccines undergo extensive testing in clinical trials involving thousands of participants before being approved for public use. These trials are carefully designed to assess both the vaccine's ability to prevent disease (efficacy) and its potential side effects (safety).
- **Continuous monitoring:** Even after a vaccine is approved, it is continuously monitored to identify any rare or unexpected side effects and evaluate its real-world effectiveness.
- **Proven effectiveness:** Numerous studies show that vaccines have drastically reduced the incidence of many infectious diseases, some of which were once major causes of death and disability, e.g. tuberculosis, polio, and diphtheria. In fact, smallpox have been eradicated globally in 1980 after a worldwide vaccination programme.
- **Addressing concerns:** Like all medications, vaccines can have side effects. Most side effects are mild and temporary, while serious side effects are extremely rare. For most individuals, the benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks.



What should you do when you have concerns about vaccines?

- Consult **qualified experts** in the medical and healthcare field to understand better about vaccination.
- Seek information from **credible sources** like the WHO, Ministry of Health, and other healthcare institutions/programmes, such as Immunise4Life.
- **Be wary** of information found on social media and unverified websites.
- **Ask for the source** when receiving questionable news or information from friends and family.

Nowadays, the extensive use of social media has intensified the spread of misinformation and anti-vaccination propaganda among the public, leading to increasing vaccine hesitancy. Parents need to be aware of the negative impact of vaccine hesitancy. Referring to credible sources of information will help clear any doubts and answer any questions, thus enhancing our vaccine confidence. PP

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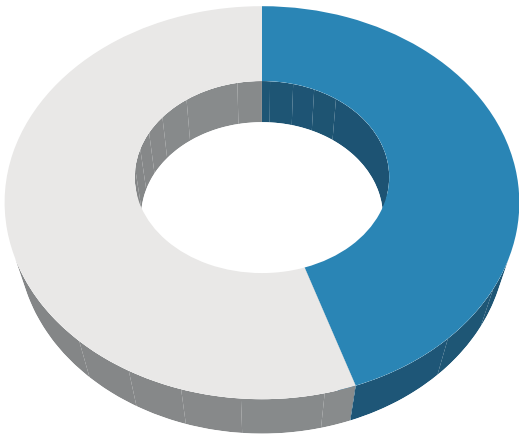
Malaysian Paediatric Association

Iron-Deficiency Anaemia

By **Prof Dr Muhammad Yazid Jalaludin**, Senior Consultant Paediatrician & Senior Consultant Paediatric Endocrinologist

Iron is an essential mineral that performs various functions in the body. A lack of iron in the body can lead to iron-deficiency anaemia.

Iron-deficiency anaemia is one of the most common nutritional deficiencies in the world.



46.5%
Malaysian children
aged 6-59 months
have anaemia

Reference: National Health and Morbidity Survey
2022: Maternal and Child Health

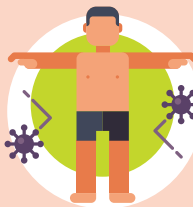
Functions of iron



An important component of haemoglobin in red blood cells, which carries oxygen throughout the body



Vital for healthy growth and development during childhood



Supports a fully-functioning immune system



Ensures normal production and function of various cells and hormones



Maintains healthy skin, hair, and nails

Common symptoms

90% of cases are asymptomatic. The following symptoms occur mainly in moderate to severe anaemia.



Extreme fatigue



Weakness



Pale skin



Headaches



Poor appetite



Shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, or chest pain



Brittle, curved nails (koilonychia) and hair loss

- Tinnitus (hearing ringing noises inside the head)
- Pica (a craving for non-nutritive substances, e.g. ice, clay, paper)
- Sore tongue

Possible causes

- A lack of iron in diet
- Pregnancy
- Blood loss due to:
 - Heavy periods
 - Gastrointestinal conditions, e.g. ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease
- Malabsorption due to:
 - Coeliac disease
 - Bariatric surgery



Potential complications

- **Growth or developmental problems** in children
- **Heart problems**, e.g. rapid heartbeat, enlarged heart, heart failure
- **Pregnancy complications**, e.g. premature births, low birth weight



How to prevent iron deficiency?

- Ensure sufficient intake of iron-rich foods
 - Red meat and poultry
 - Seafood
 - Dark green leafy vegetables, such as spinach
 - Beans, peas, and lentils
 - Dried fruit, such as raisins and apricots
 - Iron-fortified cereals, breads and pastas
- Include foods containing vitamin C during mealtimes to enhance iron absorption
 - Oranges
 - Grapefruit
 - Strawberries
 - Tomatoes
 - Broccoli
 - Peppers
- Control intake of foods with high levels of phytic acid and calcium during mealtimes, which can affect iron absorption
 - Wholegrain cereals
 - Seeds and legumes
 - Milk and dairy
- Feed babies breastmilk or iron-fortified formula in the first year
 - At 6 months, start complementary feeding and include iron-fortified cereal or pureed meat at least twice a day



Iron deficiency is a serious issue, especially among high-risk groups, such as young children and pregnant women. In fact, screening for children below 5 years should be introduced at maternal child health clinic; don't wait for symptoms to appear. However, if you notice any symptoms of iron-deficiency anaemia in your children or other family members, immediately consult a healthcare professional for a proper diagnosis and treatment. PP

An educational contribution by



Malaysian Paediatric Association

The Power of Music and Arts in Nurturing Young Minds

By **Dr Norazlin Kamal Nor**, Consultant Developmental Paediatrician



Music and arts are more than just entertainment; they are great tools that can significantly boost a child's cognitive development. Engaging with these creative mediums fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and emotional intelligence, laying a strong foundation for academic and personal success.

Cognitive benefits

Enhanced brain

development: Music and arts stimulate multiple areas of the brain, strengthening neural connections and improving cognitive function. Learning an instrument, for example, enhances memory, attention, and mental flexibility.



Enhanced creativity and imagination:

Music and arts provide a platform for children to express themselves freely, fostering their imaginations and encouraging them to think outside the box.



Improved language

skills: Music is a language in itself. Children who engage with music develop a better understanding of rhythm, pitch, and melody, which can translate into improved pronunciation, reading, and writing skills.

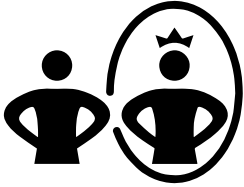


Sharpened problem-solving skills:

Whether it's composing a piece of music or creating a work of art, children are constantly faced with challenges that require them to think creatively and find solutions.



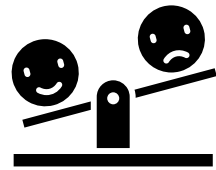
Benefits beyond the classroom



Increased confidence and self-esteem: Engaging in music and arts provides children with a sense of accomplishment and boosts their self-confidence.



Improved social skills: Group music and art activities encourage teamwork, collaboration, and communication.



Emotional regulation: Music and art can be a powerful outlet for children to express their emotions, helping them develop emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms.

Ways to incorporate music and arts into your child's life

- **Early childhood education:** Integrate music and art into your child's daily routines from a young age. Sing songs and play simple instruments together and let them have the opportunity to explore and play with paints, colour pencils, clay, or other items that can be used to express art and creativity.
- **Formal music and art education:** Enrol your child in music lessons, art classes, or after-school programmes.
- **Family activities:** Make music and art a part of family life. Sing songs together, play instruments, visit museums and galleries, go to live performances, and create art projects at home. Discuss these experiences and use it as a basis to explore and introduce other new creative outlets.
- **Technology integration:** Utilise educational apps and online resources that incorporate music and art into learning. Although we don't advice excessive screen-time exposure, judicious use of technology – with parental input and oversight – can introduce children to exciting new ideas and open their minds to new experiences and ideas.



In conclusion, music and arts are invaluable tools for nurturing well-rounded individuals. By incorporating these creative mediums into your child's education and daily life, we can foster cognitive development, ignite a lifelong passion for learning, and empower children to reach their full potential. PP

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Malaysian Paediatric Association



I'm Concerned About My Teen's Friends: What Should I Do?

By Dr Thiyyagar Nadarajaw, Consultant Paediatrician & Adolescent Medicine Specialist

Friendship plays a vital role in shaping our lives, especially during the formative years. For teenagers, having a positive circle of friends is crucial as they navigate the complexities of identity, independence, and decision-making. Surrounding your teen with supportive friendships not only enriches their current experiences but also lays the foundation for healthy future relationships.

As a parent, it's natural to be concerned about the friends your teenager chooses, especially if you feel they may be a negative influence. However, unless the friendship is truly harmful, your teen needs to learn how to make their own choices. Addressing this issue thoughtfully is important for maintaining a strong parent-child relationship while guiding your teen towards making better choices.

On the other hand, it is just as important for you as a parent to reflect on your feelings. Are your concerns based on specific behaviours such as disrespect and poor academic focus, or assumptions about the friend's family background or lifestyle? Being clear about the root of your worries ensures that your approach is fair and constructive.



What can parents do?

1 Communicate with your teen

Have an open conversation about their friend. Ask questions like, "What do you enjoy about spending time with them?" or "What activities do you usually do together?" Avoid harsh criticisms or labels, which might make your teen defensive. Instead, express your observations respectfully, for example: "I noticed their behaviour at school seems disruptive. Does that ever affect you?"





2 Set clear boundaries

Reinforce your family's values and expectations, such as mutual respect, honesty, and prioritising education. Establish rules around acceptable behaviour and curfews without targeting the friend directly.



3 Encourage positive social circle

Support your teen in meeting peers with similar values by encouraging participation in clubs, sports, or other extracurricular activities. This expands their social network and offers opportunities for healthier friendships.



4 Get to know the friend

Sometimes, parents misjudge a friend without understanding their background. Invite your teen and the friend for a casual activity, such as a meal or a family outing. This helps you observe the friend's behaviour and intentions in a neutral setting.



5 Strengthen your relationship

A strong bond with your teen can help them navigate peer influences. Ensure your communication is open and non-judgmental, so they feel safe sharing their thoughts and experiences. Observe your teen's behaviour, grades, or mood. If you notice negative changes, gently discuss your observations with your teen and seek their input.



6 Seek professional guidance when necessary

If you're deeply concerned, consider seeking advice from a school counsellor or psychologist. They can provide an objective perspective and help both you and your teen work through challenges constructively.

It's important to remember that friendships during adolescence play a significant role in your teen's social development. While your guidance is essential, allowing your teen to make choices – within safe boundaries – helps them build decision-making skills and resilience. By balancing trust, communication, and proactive support, you can help your teen navigate friendships wisely while strengthening your family bond. PP

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Positive Parenting Malaysia



Malaysia's Pioneer Expert Driven Educational Programme

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.

Social Media

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



Website

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

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



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National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia



Malaysian Mental Health Association



Malaysian Association of Kindergartens



Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia



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Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia



Early Childhood Care & Education Council

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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