



Positive Parenting Malaysia

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

A Parent's Easy Guide to Raising Kids Safely

RSV:
A Threat to Little Ones

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Shrinking Attention Span Among Teens

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WELCOME TO THE 1ST PARENTING SUMMIT & GET TO KNOW US!



Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail
Chairman of Positive Parenting Management Committee



This year, we proudly celebrate the **25th anniversary of Positive Parenting**, first launched in 2000 by the **Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA)**. For a quarter of a century, this **pioneering, expert-driven programme** has been the trusted bridge between parents and healthcare professionals – empowering families with **unbiased, accurate, and practical guidance** in raising tomorrow's healthy and happy generation!

Our Journey So Far

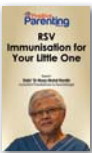
Since its inception, Positive Parenting has reached countless families through:



The Positive Parenting Guide



Hundreds of articles on website



Variety of digital content (videos, posters) via social media



Parenting forums, talks & educational campaign booklets



Newspaper articles & nationwide outreach activities



Along the way, we've worked hand-in-hand with professional bodies and corporate sponsors to bring parents the best resources for their parenting journey.

Introducing the

1st Positive Parenting Summit 2025

To mark our **Silver Jubilee**, and in conjunction with the **46th Annual Congress of MPA**, we are excited to launch our first-ever **Parenting Summit: Raising Healthy & Happy Children!** This public mini-conference will feature:

Expert talks by leading child health specialists

Topics on growth, vaccination, childhood conditions & parenting tips

On-site health screenings for children

A chance for parents to connect, share experiences & learn together

Lunch

Goodie bags

Lucky draws & prizes

Learn More through

The Parenting Atlas

We understand young parents need more than just articles and content; they also require a more structured guidance. Therefore, we are excited to introduce the ultimate A-Z guide for raising healthy, happy children – **The Parenting Atlas**

- Covers the 5 pillars of Positive Parenting
- Fully comprehensive and expertly curated
- Downloadable from the website: www.mypositiveparenting.org



A Shared Mission

The Positive Parenting programme would not be possible without the generous support of our expert partners and corporate sponsors. With your continued collaboration, we look forward to empowering even more parents and nurturing the next generation – together.

To know more about the programme and our activities, watch our video by scanning the QR code:



ASK THE EXPERTS

Topic Overview



My Child Is Shorter Than His Peers: What Should I Do?

Prof Dr Muhammad Yazid bin Jalaludin,
 Senior Consultant Paediatrician and
 Consultant Paediatric Endocrinologist

Parents are often worried when they see that their children are shorter than their friends. When is it a real concern, and what can you do to help your child catch up on their growth?



From Rashes to Relief: Tackling Eczema & Common Childhood Skin Conditions

Dr Lee Tyan Shin, Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Dermatologist

Due to their sensitive skin, children may get all kinds of rashes, including eczema. Eczema may look scary and painful, but with the right knowledge you will gain from this session, you can help your child manage their eczema and other skin conditions.



Vaccinology for Parents: What Parents Need to Know in Protecting Their Children from Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Dr Rakhee Yadav,
 Consultant Paediatrician

Vaccine development is moving fast and it can be difficult for parents to catch up with the latest news. Keep yourself updated from RSV to dengue vaccines, as well as the most recent pneumococcal vaccine.



Raising Resilient Teens: Talking So Teens Will Listen & Listening So Teens Will Talk

Dr Thiyagar Nadarajaw,
 Consultant Paediatrician and Adolescent Medicine Specialist

Parents often dread the time when their sweet little angel turns into an angsty, hormonal teenager. But most of the time, what they need is some space and a listening ear. Check out this talk to communicate with your teen better and be the mentor they need.



Let's Talk Asthma: From Wheeze to Ease

Dato' Dr Rus Anida Awang,
 Consultant Paediatrician and Paediatric Respiratory Specialist

Asthma is a common yet worrying condition in children worldwide. Children with undertreated asthma can suffer sleep disturbance and tiredness during the day, while severe asthma can lead to hospitalisation. This talk will provide advice to alleviate and control your child's asthma.

Other activities

Free Child Screening



Vision check
 (by Optometrist)



Speech & hearing test
 (by Audiologist)



Child developmental assessment
 (by Clinical Psychologist)



BMI check and dietary advice
 (by Dietitian)

Free Consultation

Lunch

Goodie bags

Lucky draws & prizes

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Positive Parenting Malaysia

expert collaborators & management committee

Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail

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



Malaysian Paediatric Association
mpaeds.my

“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



Nutrition Society of Malaysia
www.nutrivet.org.my

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



Dr Tee E Siong
Nutritionist and Immediate-Past President, NSM



Dr Roseline Yap
Nutritionist and Hon. Treasurer, NSM



Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia
www.ogsm.org.my

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



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



Malaysian Psychiatric Association
www.psychiatry-malaysia.org

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



Dr Yen Teck Hoe
Consultant Psychiatrist



Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology
www.msclp.org

“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 Vice President, MSCP



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

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



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



Malaysian Mental Health Association
mmha.org.my

“Mental health and resilience starts with the family.”



Dato' Dr Andrew Mohanraj
Consultant Psychiatrist & President, MMHA



Malaysian Association of Paediatric Dentistry
mapd.my

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



Dr Nabihah Dzairuddin
Paediatric Dental Specialist & Secretary, MAPD



Malaysia Association of Registered Early Child Care and Development (MyECCD)
ppbm.org

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



Pn Norsheila Abdullah
President, PPBM



Malaysian Association of Kindergartens

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



Ms Eveleen Ling
Chairman, PTM



Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia
https://www.afpm.org.my/

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



Dr Norsiah Ali
President, AFPM



Early Childhood Care & Education Council
https://ecceccouncil.org/

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



Datin Prof Dr Mariani Md Nor
President, ECCECC Council

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Positive Parenting
Malaysia

DATUK DR ZULKIFLI ISMAIL

Chairman, Positive Parenting Management Committee
Secretary-General, Asia Pacific Pediatric Association (APPA)



Happy 25th Anniversary, Positive Parenting!

This year marks the 25th year since Positive Parenting was first initiated in 2000. It started as a small, one-off parenting educational campaign, yet we managed to sustain this programme until today, with various publications, events, and digital content being produced continuously to empower parents with the latest and credible parenting knowledge.

We continue this educational effort in this issue, starting with the Feature article highlighting another important aspect of child health, which is child safety and injury prevention; the article touches on safety at home, outside, on the road, and the basics of first aid. Additionally, our experts also discuss the danger of RSV infection to young children, the benefits of sensory play on child development, the concern on teen's lack of attention due to gadgets and social media, and other topics that are relevant to parents.

Hopefully these articles will be helpful in your parenting journey. You can also visit our website (www.mypositiveparenting.org) to learn about other parenting topics in our previous issues. Don't forget to follow us on Facebook (@positiveparentingmalaysia), Instagram (@mypositiveparenting), YouTube (ParentFlix), and Spotify (ParentFlix) for more cool contents and latest updates!

The articles contained in this magazine are not in any way intended as substitutes for medical attention. When in doubt, consult your doctor. Malaysian Paediatric Association, the experts and their respective organisations do not endorse any brands and are not responsible or liable for any advertisement or advertorial by sponsors.

Positive Parenting guide is published by VersaComm Sdn Bhd, Secretariat of the Positive Parenting programme initiated by the Malaysian Paediatric Association. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the Positive Parenting Secretariat.

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Positive Parenting Programme is supported by an educational grant from:

Co-sponsors



Published by:

Malaysian Paediatric Association

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[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/positiveparentingmalaysia) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mypositiveparenting)

www.mypositiveparenting.org

Printer: Percetakan Osacar Sdn Bhd,

Lot 37659, No. 11, Jalan 4/37A, Taman Bukit Maluri Industrial Area, 52100 Kepong, Kuala Lumpur

A Parent's Easy Guide to Raising Kids Safely

As parents, it is our duty to ensure our children's wellbeing and protect them from all forms of danger, not only from germs and illnesses, but also the environment and other external factors. Whether at home or on the road, different situations require different approaches in preventing injury and ensuring the safety of our little ones.

Home Safe Home

What the expert says...



Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail,
Consultant Paediatrician
& Paediatric Cardiologist

“Homes often signify comfort and security, but they can also harbour hidden dangers for curious young children. As parents, ensuring a safe home environment for our children is paramount. As they navigate different developmental stages, their understanding of risks evolves, making it crucial for parents to be their proactive guardians.”

Simple oversights can unfortunately lead to preventable injuries. By taking the time to identify potential hazards and implement safety measures, you're not just protecting your children from harm, but also fostering an environment where they can explore and learn with greater security.

Home safety tips

Here are some essential tips to help you childproof your home:

Living room and bedroom:

- **Secure furniture:** Anchor tall or unstable furniture like bookshelves and dressers to the wall to prevent them from tipping over.
- **Manage cords:** Keep electrical cords out of reach and secure loose cords to prevent tripping or strangulation hazards. Use cord concealers or ties.
- **Window safety:** Install window grilles or safety nets, especially on upper floors. Keep windows locked when not in use and move furniture away from windows to discourage climbing.
- **Small objects:** Keep small items like buttons, coins, and batteries out of reach, as these can be choking hazards.

Bathroom:

- **Drowning prevention:** Never leave babies and toddlers unattended in the bathtub, not even for a moment.
- **Water temperature:** Set your water heater to a maximum of 49°C to prevent scalding. Always check the water temperature before placing your child in the bath. Prepare baby's bath water by adding cold water followed by hot water.
- **Slip prevention:** Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on the bathroom floor to prevent falls.
- **Medication and toiletries:** Store all medications, cleaning products, and toiletries in locked cabinets or places that are inaccessible to children.
- **Electrical safety:** Keep electrical appliances like hair dryers and curling irons away from water and unplugged when not in use.

Kitchen:

- **Stove safety:** Use back burners whenever possible and turn pot handles inward so children cannot reach them.
- **Sharp objects:** Store knives, scissors, and other sharp utensils in locked drawers or out of reach.
- **Hot liquids:** Keep hot kettles or drinks away from the edges of tables and counters. Never hold a hot beverage while holding a child.
- **Appliance safety:** Ensure appliances are unplugged when not in use and keep small appliances like toasters and blenders away from the edges of counters.



Out and About

“ The outdoors is a vital classroom for children, fostering physical development, curiosity, and a sense of independence. However, this environment also presents new safety challenges that require preparation and awareness from both parents and children. ”

“ The goal is not to limit their exploration, but to empower them with the knowledge and skills to navigate the world confidently and securely. By teaching them simple rules and maintaining vigilant supervision, you can transform every outdoor excursion into a safe and enriching experience. ”

Outdoor safety tips

Here are essential tips to ensure your child's safety in various outdoor settings:



Playground

- **Active supervision:** Never leave a child unattended at a playground. Position yourself where you can see them clearly at all times.
- **Check the equipment:** Before letting your child play, inspect the equipment for any broken parts, rust, or sharp edges. Also, ensure the ground surface is soft (e.g. rubber, mulch, or sand) to absorb falls.
- **Dress appropriately:** Avoid clothing with drawstrings, hoods, or anything that could get caught on playground equipment. Ensure shoes are properly tied to prevent trips and falls.

Public areas

- **Hold hands:** Teach your child to hold your hand in busy public spaces like parking lots, sidewalks, and malls. This is the single best way to prevent them from wandering off.
- **Stay close:** In crowds, establish a “stay within arm’s reach” rule. If separated, have a pre-determined meeting spot, and teach your child to stay put and call for help from a “safe stranger.”



Stranger danger

- **The “Yell, Run, Tell” rule:** Teach your child that if a stranger approaches them and asks them to come closer, they should yell “NO!”, run away immediately, and tell a trusted adult what happened.
- **Identify safe strangers:** Point out people they can ask for help if they are lost, such as police officers, firefighters, or store employees with a name tag.
- **No secrets:** Reassure your child that a safe adult will never ask them to keep a secret from their parents, and they should always tell you if anyone tries to do so.

On the Road

What the expert says...



Dr Rakhee Yadav
Consultant Paediatrician

“The road is an environment where children’s developing senses and impulsivity make them uniquely vulnerable. They may not grasp concepts like vehicle speed or stopping distances, and their small size makes them harder for drivers to see.”

A child’s journey, whether walking to the park, riding in the car, or taking the bus, is a constant opportunity for a safety lesson. By implementing simple, consistent habits and teaching your children key rules, you can significantly reduce the risk of accidents and instil a lifelong respect for road safety.

Road and street safety tips

Here are crucial tips for keeping children safe on the road:



Pedestrian safety

- **Hold hands and stay together:** Always hold your child’s hand firmly when walking near streets, in parking lots, or through driveways. Teach them to walk on the inside of the sidewalk, away from the curb.
- **Stop, look, and listen:** Practice this routine before crossing any street. Teach them to stop at the curb, look right, left, and right again to ensure there are no oncoming vehicles, and be aware of the traffic. Emphasise making eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- **Use crosswalks:** Explain that it is only safe to cross the street at designated crosswalks or intersections with traffic signals. Never allow them to dart out between parked cars.

In the car

- **Proper restraints:** Ensure your child is in the correct car seat or booster seat for their age, weight, and height. Always install the seat correctly and make sure the harness is snug.
- **Back seat is best:** Children 12 and under should always ride in the back seat. This is the safest place in the car, as it protects them from a deploying front airbag.
- **Childproof the vehicle:** Use the child safety locks on car doors and windows to prevent children from opening them unexpectedly. Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.



Public transport

- **Platform safety:** When waiting for a train or bus, stand a safe distance behind the designated safety line or away from the curb. Keep your child’s hand securely in yours to prevent them from stepping too close to the tracks.
- **Hold on tight:** Once aboard, find a seat immediately. If standing, ensure your child holds a handrail or strap, and never allow them to wander or stand near the doors.
- **Watch your step:** Teach your child to wait for the vehicle to come to a complete stop before attempting to board or exit. Be mindful of the gap between the vehicle and the platform.



Basic First Aid

“ Minor accidents are an inevitable part of growing up, but they don't have to be a source of panic for parents. With a well-stocked first aid kit and some basic knowledge, you can feel confident and capable when your child gets a scrape or a bump. Being prepared not only allows you to provide immediate, effective care but also helps to calm your child and reassure them that they are safe. ”



First aid tips

Here are essential tips to help you be prepared for common injuries:

First aid kit essentials

- **Wound care supplies:** Include a variety of adhesive bandages, sterile gauze pads, and medical tape. Pack antiseptic wipes or a small bottle of saline solution to clean cuts and scrapes.
- **Medications and tools:** Stock a children's pain reliever (like paracetamol) and a cold pack. Be sure to include small scissors for cutting tape or clothing and a pair of fine-tipped tweezers for removing splinters.
- **Emergency information:** Keep a list of emergency contacts, including poison control, your paediatrician, and local emergency services, inside the kit.
- **Gloves and hand sanitiser:** Always use disposable gloves to protect both yourself and your child from germs when administering first aid. Keep hand sanitiser nearby as well.

Dealing with common injuries

- **Cuts and scrapes:** Gently wash the area with soap and water to clean it. Apply gentle pressure with a clean cloth or gauze to stop any bleeding. Once bleeding has stopped, apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment and cover with a bandage.
- **Bumps and bruises:** Apply a cold pack or a bag of ice wrapped in a towel to the injured area for 15-20 minutes. This helps reduce swelling and pain. Elevate the bruised limb if possible.
- **Nosebleeds:** Have your child sit or stand and lean slightly forward (not back). Pinch the soft part of their nose just below the bony bridge for 10-15 minutes, breathing through their mouth.
- **Minor burns:** For small burns from hot liquids or surfaces, immediately cool the area under cool (not cold) running water for at least 10 minutes. Do not apply ice.



Life-threatening situations

Immediately call emergency services if your child:

- Is unconscious or unresponsive.
- Is having difficulty breathing or is turning blue.
- Is experiencing severe chest pain.
- Has a seizure.
- Has a severe head injury.
- Is bleeding profusely and the bleeding cannot be stopped.
- Has ingested a poisonous substance.
- Is experiencing a severe allergic reaction.
- Has fallen from a large height.



Nourishing Your Journey

A Guide to Healthy Pregnancy

By **Dr Yap Moy Juan**, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist & **Dr Roseline Yap**, Nutritionist

Eating a balanced and varied diet during pregnancy is crucial for a healthy pregnancy and for optimal growth and development of your foetus. The food and drinks you consume are the only source of nutrition for your foetus, making your dietary choices more important than ever.

The impact of maternal malnutrition

Poor nutrition during pregnancy, whether from overeating or undereating, can have serious consequences for both the mother and the developing foetus.

Overnutrition:

Consuming too many calories or unhealthy foods (e.g. deep-fried foods, sugary foods) can lead to **excessive weight gain**, which increases the risk of complications such as **gestational diabetes and preeclampsia**.

Gestational diabetes may lead to a larger foetus, which may result in a difficult delivery, while preeclampsia is a dangerous condition characterised by high blood pressure that can affect multiple organs.



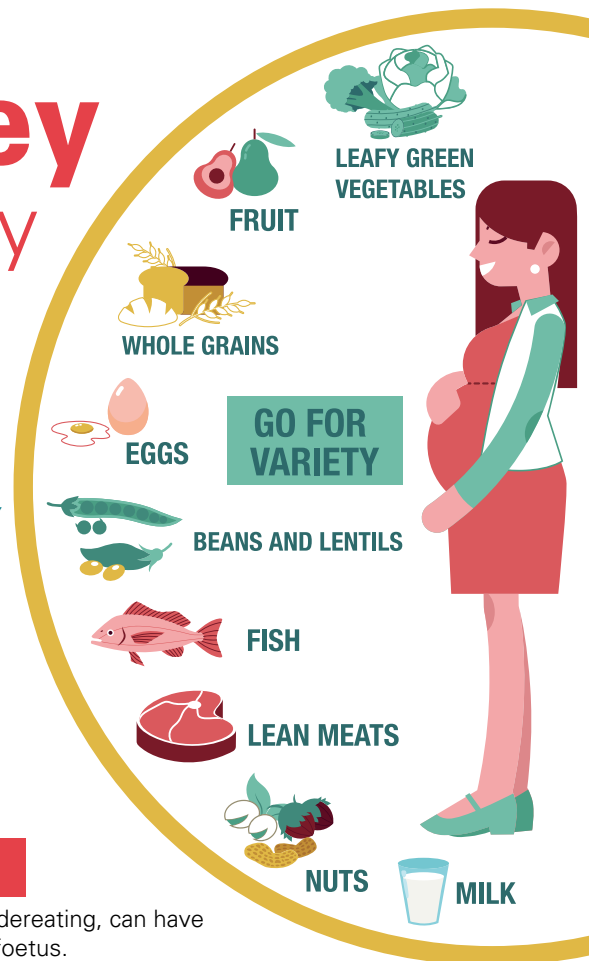
Undernutrition:

Not eating enough or not getting essential nutrients may lead to a range of issues. Undernourished pregnant women may experience **maternal anaemia**, leading to feelings of **lethargy and weakness**. Poor nutrition can also contribute to **maternal stress** and an overall decline in health.



Risks to the foetus:

Both over- and undernutrition can significantly impact the foetus. It can lead to **intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR)**, where the foetus does not grow as expected, and **impaired development of the brain and immune system**, setting the stage for potential long-term health problems, e.g. diabetes mellitus, hypertension, heart disease, etc.



Nutritional tips for pregnant women

A well-rounded diet is the cornerstone of a healthy pregnancy. Focus on variety and nutrient density to support maternal and foetal health.

- **Prioritise nutrient-dense foods:** Aim to fill your plate with a variety of whole foods.

Whole grains: Such as brown rice, oat, wholemeal bread, corn, and wholegrain cereals provide energy and dietary fibre.



Vegetable and fruit: Offer a wide range of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and dietary fibre. Aim for a variety of colours to ensure a broad spectrum of nutrients.



Legumes, nuts, and seeds: Excellent sources of protein, healthy fats, and essential minerals.



Lean meats, poultry, fish, and eggs:

Provide high-quality protein and iron. Opt for low-mercury fish like sardines, tilapia, or anchovies.



Milk and dairy products: Important for calcium, protein, and vitamins such as vitamin D, A, and B vitamins.

Go for pasteurised options. Pregnant mums may also choose maternal formulas with no added sugars and low GI and fat content for a healthier option.



- **Focus on these micronutrients:** Certain nutrients are particularly vital during pregnancy.



Folate/folic acid: Crucial for preventing neural tube defects. Get it from leafy greens, citrus fruits, and fortified cereals.

Calcium and vitamin D: Essential for strong bones and teeth development for your foetus. Vitamin D has been shown to reduce risks of pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes. Sources include dairy products, fortified foods, and sunlight (for vitamin D).

Iron: Needed to make red blood cells and prevent anaemia. Found in lean meats, poultry, fish, leafy greens, and fortified cereals.

Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), gangliosides, and milk fat globule membrane (MFGM):

These components are vital for foetal brain and nervous system development. DHA is an omega-3 fatty acid found in fatty fish such as salmon and tuna, while gangliosides and MFGM are both compounds found in milk (and in some maternal formulas).

Probiotics and prebiotics: A healthy gut microbiome is linked to better nutrient absorption and a strong immune system. Probiotics like *Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019 and prebiotics found in foods such as asparagus and banana can help support gut health.

- **Limit/avoid these foods:** Some foods can be harmful during pregnancy and should be consumed in moderation or avoided completely.

Limit: Caffeinated drinks and sugary drinks/foods. Excess sugar intake may contribute to excessive gestational weight gain, gestational diabetes, and foetal macrosomia (large for gestational age). Check the ingredients list on the food label to see if there is any added sugar; opt for products with a “no added sugars” label.



Avoid: Alcohol (can cause serious birth defects), raw or undercooked seafood, eggs, or meat (risk of bacterial contamination caused by *Listeria monocytogenes*), and unpasteurised juice, milk, or cheese (also a risk for bacterial infection).



Beyond diet: exercise is key

While diet is a major component of a healthy pregnancy, staying physically active is just as important. Regular, moderate exercise can help you manage proper body weight gain, improve blood circulation, reduce backaches, and prepare your body for labour. Activities like walking, swimming, and prenatal yoga are generally safe and beneficial. Always consult your doctor before starting or continuing an exercise routine during pregnancy. A balanced approach that includes a nutritious diet and regular exercise provides the best foundation for a healthy pregnancy. PP

An educational collaboration with



Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia



Nutrition Society of Malaysia



Nurturing Hygiene in the Family

By **Dr Shalini Shanmugam**, Consultant Paediatrician

In today's fast-paced world, establishing good hygiene habits within the family is more crucial than ever. Cleanliness is not merely about appearances; it's a cornerstone of good health, preventing the spread of germs and fostering a sense of well-being.

A clean and hygienic environment contributes to a happier and healthier family life. By instilling these habits early, parents equip their children with essential life skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Aspects of hygiene and cleanliness

Personal hygiene

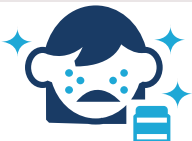


Body: Regular handwashing with soap and water, especially before eating and after using the restroom, is paramount. Encourage daily showers or baths. Teach proper techniques for brushing teeth twice a day and flossing. Emphasise the importance of nail hygiene, keeping them trimmed and clean.

Clothing: Encourage changing into clean clothes daily and after physical activities. Teach children how to sort laundry and the importance of washing clothes regularly to remove dirt and bacteria.



Room: A tidy personal space contributes to mental well-being. Guide children on how to organise their belongings, make their beds, and keep their rooms clutter-free. Ensure bed sheets are changed weekly and pillows are aired out. Regular dusting and vacuuming are also important.



Teens: For teenagers, respecting their personal space while still encouraging cleanliness can be a balancing act. Open communication and setting clear expectations are key. Discuss the importance of deodorant use, managing acne, and maintaining overall cleanliness. Talk to girls about proper use of menstrual pads.

Home hygiene



Living room: This high-traffic area requires frequent attention. Encourage family members to put away items after use. Regular vacuuming or sweeping, dusting surfaces, and cleaning spills promptly will maintain a clean living space.

Kitchen: As the food preparation area, the kitchen demands meticulous hygiene. Emphasise washing dishes promptly after meals, wiping down countertops and cooking surfaces, and regularly cleaning the refrigerator. Proper food storage is also crucial.



Bathroom: The bathroom is prone to moisture and bacteria. Regular cleaning of the toilet, sink, shower or bathtub is essential. Ensure proper ventilation and encourage the use of separate towels.



Surfaces: Regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, and remote controls, especially during illness outbreaks.

Clean environment

- **Good waste management:** Teach the importance of proper waste disposal, using designated bins, and avoiding littering. Explain the environmental impact of improper waste management.
- **Reduce-reuse-recycle:** Involve the family in practicing the 3Rs. Encourage reducing consumption, reusing items whenever possible, and properly sorting waste for recycling.
- **Eco-friendly products:** Consider using environmentally friendly cleaning products that are less harsh on both health and the planet. Explain to children why these choices matter.
- **Keeping vectors at bay:** A dirty environment would encourage pests to thrive. Decluttering can also reduce stagnant water being collected in containers that could lead to breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Tips to foster hygiene and cleanliness in children

- **Lead by example:** Children learn by observing. Parents who practice good hygiene and maintain a clean environment are more likely to have children who follow suit.
- **Make it fun:** Turn hygiene tasks into games or challenges, especially for younger children. Sing songs while washing hands or create a reward chart for completed chores.
- **Establish routines:** Integrate hygiene practices into daily routines, such as washing hands before meals and brushing teeth before bed. Consistency helps these habits become automatic.
- **Praise and encourage:** Acknowledge and praise children's efforts in maintaining cleanliness. Positive reinforcement is more effective than constant nagging.
- **Involve them in chores:** Assign age-appropriate cleaning tasks to children. This fosters a sense of responsibility and teamwork.



By consciously cultivating these hygiene habits within the family, parents can create a healthier, happier, and more responsible environment for everyone. PP

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By **Dato' Dr Musa Mohd Nordin**,
Consultant Paediatrician &
Neonatologist & **Dr Husna Musa**,
Paediatrician & Lecturer

RSV A Threat to Little Ones

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that infects the lungs and breathing passages. While most people experience mild, cold-like symptoms, RSV can be a serious health concern, especially for infants and older adults. In fact, RSV is a leading cause of hospitalisation in young children.

What is RSV?

RSV is a highly contagious virus that spreads through droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze, or through direct contact with a contaminated surface. The virus is a significant public health issue, causing about

3.6 million hospitalisations & **110,000 deaths**

annually in children under the age of five years worldwide.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of an RSV infection typically appear within 2 to 8 days after exposure. They often resemble a common cold and can include:



Runny nose



Decreased appetite



Coughing



Sneezing



Fever

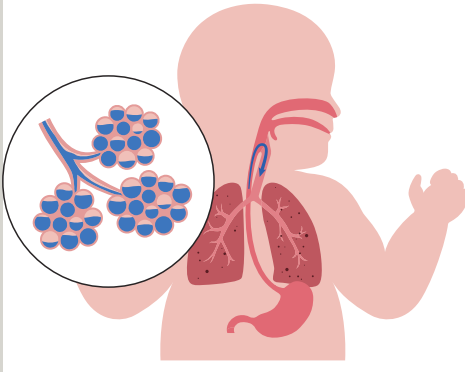


Wheezing

In young infants, the only signs of infection may be irritability, decreased activity, and breathing difficulties.

Treatment and prevention

Severe complications in children



While most RSV infections are mild, they can lead to severe complications in young children. RSV is the most common cause of **bronchiolitis** (inflammation of the small airways in the lungs) and **pneumonia** (an infection of the lungs) in infants and toddlers. These conditions can cause severe breathing problems, requiring hospitalisation and, in some cases, mechanical ventilation.

Children with a higher risk of severe RSV disease include:

- Premature infants
- Infants under 6 months old
- Children with chronic lung disease
- Children with congenital heart disease
- Children with weakened immune systems

Parents should seek immediate medical attention if their child has difficulty breathing, is wheezing, is dehydrated, or is showing signs of lethargy.

Unfortunately, there is no specific cure for an RSV infection. Treatment focuses on supportive care to relieve symptoms, which may include fever reducers, pain relievers, and, in severe cases, oxygen therapy or IV fluids in a hospital setting. **Antibiotics are not effective against RSV** as it is a viral infection.

However, there are new and effective ways to prevent severe RSV disease. These include:

- **Maternal RSV vaccine:** An RSV vaccine has been approved for pregnant women. The vaccine is administered during the third trimester of pregnancy. It helps protect the newborn from severe RSV by transferring protective antibodies from the mother to the baby before birth. This passive immunity provides critical protection during the first few months of life when infants are most vulnerable.



- **Infant immunisation:** A long-acting monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab, is now available for infants. This single-dose injection provides protection for at least five months, covering the entire RSV season. A single dose is recommended at birth or at the earliest opportunity.



These new immunisations are a game-changer in the fight against RSV, offering a powerful tool to protect our most vulnerable population. Along with these medical advances, basic hygiene practices like frequent hand washing and avoiding contact with sick people remain crucial for preventing the spread of RSV.

The emergence of new prevention methods for RSV marks a significant advancement in public health. By staying informed and utilising these new tools, we can collectively work towards a future with fewer hospitalisations and better health outcomes for our children and our communities. Talk with your child's doctor to learn more about protecting your child from RSV. PP

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Transmission Source ²

Influenza can be spread by airborne transmission when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, releasing droplets that others can inhale.

High Risk for Severe Flu Complications? ²

Some people are more likely to **experience serious illness** if they get the flu. Take extra precautions to protect yourself...and others!



ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?



The Elderly



Asthmatic



Pregnant mother



Heart disease



Young children



Obesity

You can **protect** yourself by ²



Washing your hands regularly with soap and water



Sanitising your hands often



Getting vaccinated every year

HAVING ANY OF THESE **SYMPTOMS** LATELY? ²



High fever



Headache



Cough



Sore throat



Muscle body aches and chills



Fatigue



Vomiting or diarrhea



Nasal congestion and runny nose

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Talk to Your Doctor Today on How to Fight and Prevent Influenza!



INFLUENZA

Myths vs Facts

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

Influenza, or the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness that can lead to serious complications. Unfortunately, several myths persist, keeping people from getting vaccinated. Let's set the record straight on some common misconceptions to help you make an informed decision for yourself and your family.

Myth:

"The flu isn't serious, so I don't need a vaccine."



Fact

This is a dangerous myth. The flu can be a serious illness, even for healthy people. It can lead to complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, and can worsen existing conditions such as asthma and heart disease. Each year, the flu leads to thousands of hospitalisations and deaths. Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to protect yourself from severe illness and helps protect those around you, including the little ones, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems.

Myth:

"The flu shot can give me the flu."



Fact

It's very unlikely for the flu shot to give you the flu. The vaccine contains an inactivated (killed) virus that cannot cause illness. If you get a nasal spray vaccine, it contains a weakened live virus that is designed to create an immune response without causing the flu. Any mild side effects, such as a low-grade fever or muscle aches, are simply signs that your body is building protection, and they are not the flu itself.

Myth:

“The flu vaccine has severe side effects.”



Fact

Serious side effects from the flu vaccine are extremely rare. The most common side effects are mild and short-lived, including soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site. Some people may also experience a headache or low-grade fever. These symptoms typically last only a day or two. The benefits of preventing the flu and its complications far outweigh the small risk of experiencing these mild side effects.

Myth:

“I can't get vaccinated if I'm pregnant.”



Fact

The flu shot is safe and highly recommended for pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy. Pregnant women are at a higher risk for flu-related complications. Getting vaccinated not only protects the mother from severe illness but also provides passive immunity to the newborn for the first few months of life when they are too young to be vaccinated themselves. The flu shot is considered safe for both the mother and the baby.

Myth:

“All flu vaccines are the same.”



Fact

While all flu vaccines protect against influenza, there are different types. Standard flu shots protect against three or four different viruses. High-dose vaccines are available for adults 65 and older to elicit a stronger immune response. There's also a nasal spray vaccine that is an option for healthy individuals between the ages of 2 and 49 who aren't pregnant (but it is not available in Malaysia currently). Your healthcare provider can help determine the best vaccine for you based on your age and health status.

By understanding and debunking these common myths, we can make informed decisions about flu prevention and protect ourselves, our families, and our communities from the serious consequences of influenza. Getting vaccinated annually remains the most effective way to reduce the risk of getting sick with the flu and its potentially severe complications. Consult your doctor or healthcare provider for more information about the flu and the flu vaccine. PP

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What children eat at school can make a big difference. A healthy and balanced lunchbox meal nourishes the body, supports steady energy levels, and helps them stay alert and focused throughout the day.



Smart Lunches, Happy Kids

by **Dr Roseline Yap**, Nutritionist

Lunchbox meals packed with sugary, salty, or oily foods can lead to sugar crashes, sluggishness, and poor concentration. Items like chocolate bars, *kuih*, and sugary drinks may provide a quick burst of energy, but often leave children feeling tired soon after. Similarly, foods like instant noodles, fried nuggets, and crisps are typically high in salt, fat, and additives, which can affect not just energy, but overall health, immunity and wellbeing.

What should go in a **healthy and balanced lunchbox**?

1 **Fruit and vegetable:**

High in dietary fibre, vitamins and antioxidants. Aim for variety in colour and texture.

– Examples: cucumber sticks, apple slices, cherry tomatoes.



2 **Whole grains:**

Provide steady, long-lasting energy.

– Examples: brown rice, wholemeal bread, wholegrain wraps or pasta.

3 **Protein:**

Supports growth, builds muscles, and keeps kids full longer.

– Examples: grilled chicken, eggs, tofu, fish, tempeh.

4 **Healthy fats:**

Support brain development.

– Examples: avocado, natural peanut butter, nuts and seeds.

Note: Always be aware about allergies if children are sharing food in school.

Sample lunchbox meal combinations



Combo 1

- Mini chicken satay bites (boneless, no sticks)
- Cucumber sticks and cherry tomatoes
- Wholemeal sandwich with a thin layer of peanut sauce spread
- Apple slices



Combo 2

- Fried brown rice with frozen peas and carrots, *ikan bilis*, and egg (less oil)
- Papaya cubes



Combo 3

- *Mee hoon goreng* with vegetables and shredded chicken
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Banana

Creative ideas to make lunch fun

For main dish

Mini DIY *popiah* bar

- Spread a thin layer of sweet sauce on *popiah* skin.
- Fill it with grated carrots, shredded lettuce, mashed tofu, or egg.

For main dish

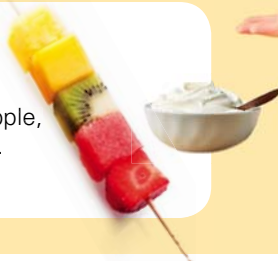
Nasi kerabu-inspired bento

- Blue rice (use butterfly pea flower), shredded cabbage, grated carrots, egg strips.
- Serve with a small piece of grilled fish.
- Add grated coconut (*serunding*) for flavour.

For dessert

Fruit skewer

- Alternate cubes of pineapple, honeydew, and *jambu air*.
- Serve with yoghurt dip.



Overcoming picky eating

To encourage healthier eating habits and reduce picky eating, involve your child in the lunchbox meal process. Let them help plan menus and give them the power to choose between two or three healthy options. Making food visually appealing can also go a long way – use cookie cutters for fun shapes or pack meals in bento-style containers with separate compartments for dips and sauces. Establishing a simple routine, such as setting aside time once a week to prepare meals together, not only builds valuable life skills but also makes kids more likely to enjoy what they've helped create.

Parent checklist

- Keep portions age-appropriate
- Avoid sugary, salty, or oily snacks
- Include plain water
- Use insulated containers for hot or cold foods
- Label all lunchbox items with your child's name



Small changes to lunchbox meals can make a big difference in how children learn, play and grow throughout the day. PP

An educational collaboration with



Nutrition Society of Malaysia



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

The Power of **Sensory Play**

Sensory play is more than just fun and games. It's the feel of wet sand squishing between their fingers at the beach, the vibrant colours of a homemade "rainbow" from dyed rice, or the fragrant aroma of bunga kantan and lemongrass in a pretend masak-masak session. These hands-on experiences allow children to explore, experiment, and make sense of the world.

It includes any type of play that stimulates the senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. It also incorporates the often-overlooked senses of balance (vestibular) and body awareness (proprioception), crucial for physical development and coordination. In essence, it's a child's natural way of understanding their surroundings.

By engaging their senses, children are not just playing, they are also building neural pathways. These early interactions support cognitive growth, information processing, problem-solving skills, and a strong foundation for future learning.

Sensory play: how play can be beneficial

From boosting brain power to building social skills, sensory play offers a world of benefits that go far beyond the playroom. These include:

- Cognitive development:** Sensory play builds neural pathways. Problem-solving activities like pouring water into a container or building with blocks foster critical thinking, focus, and memory.
- Fine and gross motor skills:** Manipulating playdough or tweezers develops fine motor control; jumping or climbing strengthens gross motor skills for coordination and balance.
- Language development:** Exploring textures teaches descriptive words like "smooth" or "sticky", enriching communication. Talking about actions and observations leads to conversation.
- Social and emotional development:** Sensory play can calm children and help them self-regulate. Playing together teaches sharing, taking turns, and empathy.
- Sensory integration:** Regular sensory play helps children process and organise sensory input, filtering distractions so they can focus.
- Calming effect:** Activities can reduce anxiety and frustration.



Try these sensory play ideas!

The best sensory activities use simple, everyday items. Here are some ideas:



Touch

Activities for touch can include playing with materials such as playdough, slime, or kinetic sand, as well as fun games like finger painting. They can also explore different textures, sizes, and weights using a sensory bin filled with rice, pasta, or beans, or playing with wooden blocks and stackers.



Sight

Parents can use colourful picture books or flashcards, or sort objects by their colour and size. Watching bubbles float and pop during bath time is also a great way to stimulate sight.



Hearing

Try playing with homemade or store-bought musical instruments, singing songs and nursery rhymes, or listening to the sounds of nature during a walk.



Smell and taste

Activities for smell and taste involve taste-testing a variety of foods with different flavours – like sweet, sour, and salty – and smelling flowers or herbs from a garden.



Movement (balance and body awareness)

Playing in the playground, swinging, jumping and rolling – all can stimulate their senses of movement, balance, and body awareness.



Sensory play isn't just a way to pass the time – it's a vital part of childhood that sparks curiosity, builds essential life skills, and helps children feel more confident in the world around them. By weaving simple, sensory-rich experiences into everyday life, parents can turn ordinary moments into powerful opportunities for learning, growth, and joy. PP

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Developmental Benefits:



Fine Motor Skills & Coordination:
Toys like shape stackers help children improve motor skills.



Cognitive Thinking:
Open-ended play fosters problem-solving and cognitive growth.



Creativity:
Unlike electronic toys, wooden ones spark imagination and creative play.



Sensory Stimulation:
Different textures and weights aid sensory development.



Emotional Growth:
Promotes empathy, patience and problem-solving.

Other Benefits:



Durability:
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Eco-Friendly:
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Kid-Tested, Expert Approved:
We work with real experts: kids and Fisher-Price Play Lab™ Child Development Experts to ensure our toys are fun, age-appropriate, and enriching playtime.



Open-Ended Play:
Encourages versatile, imaginative play.

Digital Defenders:

Raising Smart and Secure Online Explorers

By Dr Yong Junina Fadzil, Consultant Paediatrician & Paediatric Cardiologist

Children of today belong to the internet generation. Gone are the days of poring over thick books for some obscure information. Today, information is literally at their fingertips. A click or a swipe is all they need. Dial-up phones have given way to smartphones and playing together no longer happens in parks and playgrounds. With internet, they can play with their friends on various devices such as tablets and phones.

While this may sound like a perfect existence, the cyberspace is not without risks and problems. These range from exposure to inappropriate content, such as pornography or violence, to grooming and cyberbullying. Plus, these dangers hide behind the screen of anonymity. They may become acquainted with a child by pretending to be their peers to gain their trust. When they are found out, it may be too late.

Some parents may feel that the best way to protect their children from these dangers is to ban internet access. However, this is neither practical nor feasible. The internet, like it or not, is an integral part of their lives. We do not ban driving to avoid accidents. Rather, we attend driving classes and get driving licenses so that we are safer drivers. The same goes with internet use. Education is the way to go.

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8 ways to navigate the cyberspace

1. Start with open, honest conversations

Be curious about their cyber presence. Ask in a friendly tone about how they utilise the devices and what they do online. Talk about the content they watch. Remind them that not all that they see online is real.

Be wary if they say an adult is trying to connect with them. When it comes to online gaming, game manufacturers have their own built-in safety mechanisms. Some games with open servers block the chat function for children under the age of 13. Ensure that your child types in his or her real age to enable the function.

2. Set ground rules together

Set some ground rules together. Emphasise that this is for their own safety, but as parents, we need to abide by them as well.

- Age-appropriate screen time.
- When and where devices can be used, particularly on school nights.
- Be honest and report inappropriate content. Parents can also install internet nannies to minimise the risk of exposure.

3. Be firm, not cruel

Take an active interest in what your children are watching or playing and join them. Explain why certain contents or sites are deemed inappropriate. For shows or games, take the age category seriously. An eight-year old child should not be watching or playing a PG13 or 18SX show or game. Ask them what their friends are up to online, but do not judge or berate them.

Always be mindful of their need for privacy, especially teenagers. Maintaining a good relationship with them will ensure you a spot in their lists of friends and followers. Be respectful of what you post on their page. Telling them off or making fun of them online will cause undue embarrassment. If you are uncomfortable with something they posted, talk to them privately.

4. Critical thinking is key

Guide your child into analysing and questioning what they see on social media. Remind them not to be too flattered by compliments from strangers, not even when they claim to be of the same age with a matching profile photo. The internet affords anonymity and people can pretend to be someone else. Remind your child to be polite online and to never post photos that would expose their school or personal details.

5. Talk about digital footprints

The youth of today have a tendency to post everything on social media. Explain to them that this information is called a digital footprint and can be retrieved even after it has been deleted. Avoid posting sensitive photos. Ask them: "Would you be okay if your cikgu or grandma sees this post? If not, don't post it." Remind your teens that their future employers may see their disgraceful photos and that may diminish their chances of getting a job.

6. Point out online red flags

Teach them to trust their instincts and to always tell a trusted adult if something feels wrong. Help your child recognise danger signals, such as:

- Requests for personal information or private photos.
- Strangers asking to meet in person or offering gifts.
- Messages that feel "off" or make them uncomfortable.

7. Prioritise privacy and passwords

- Show your child how to create strong passwords and enable privacy settings.
- Remind them to only accept friend or follow requests from people they know in real life.
- Follow the law of the land and the app. For example, Facebook and Instagram only license their platforms for those over 13. Countries like Australia has introduced a minimum age to access social media.

8. Model the behaviour you want to see

Be the example: use the internet responsibly, avoid oversharing, and treat others with kindness online. Let them see you take breaks from screens and enjoy offline time too. Encourage respectful screen habits across generations, including grandparents too, as they may help take care of the children. Do not post photos of your children without their permission, and never post photos of other people's children, not even your nieces or nephews.

Online safety isn't something that can be taught overnight. It requires repeated reminders and close monitoring, in a non-threatening manner. Through gentle yet firm guidance, children can learn to be internet savvy and avoid potential predators and scams. Children with good online ethics are less likely to fall victims or to become bullies. They are our future – let us guide them to be smart and secure digital defenders. PP

In today's fast-paced digital era, it's easy for our children to get swept up in the constant stream of notifications, videos and social media updates. As Malaysian parents, many of us worry about our kids spending too much time on their devices. We see them glued to their screens, endlessly scrolling through TikTok or Instagram Reels.



Shrinking Attention Span Among Teens

By Dr Thiyagar Nadarajaw, Consultant Paediatrician & Adolescent Medicine Specialist



This “doomscrolling”, as it's often called, can have a surprising effect, shrinking their attention spans down to what feels like just a few seconds. If you find your child struggling to concentrate on schoolwork, conversations, or even a simple story, you're not alone. Many paediatricians and child development experts across Malaysia are hearing these very same concerns and believe they are valid. The way modern technology is designed – to be addictive and constantly rewarding – is directly impacting our children's ability to focus.

The impact of digital life on focus

The constant engagement with digital technology fundamentally reshapes a teenager's brain, making it challenging to maintain sustained attention and deep concentration. Here's what happens:

- **A brain rewired for distraction:** The internet and social media are engineered to be addictive. Notifications, new content, and the desire for social connection provide small “dopamine hits”, which create a reward loop. The brain is effectively trained to seek out these frequent, short bursts of novelty and excitement.
- **The cost of “task switching”:** When a teen's focus is interrupted by a notification or the urge to check their phone, their brain must shift gears. This constant task switching negatively affects the quality and speed of their work.
- **The data on attention:** Research suggests that the average amount of time people stay focused on a single task while using a device has dropped significantly. What was once measured in minutes is now measured in seconds.

What are the effects?

A reduced attention span is more than a minor annoyance as it can have profound effects on a teen's development and daily life. These include:

- **Academic struggles:** Constant distraction makes it difficult to concentrate during homework or classes, which can lead to poorer academic performance.
- **Reduced quality of work:** A brain that is constantly switching tasks cannot engage in the deep, sustained thought required for complex problem-solving and creative thinking.
- **Anxiety and stress:** The pressure to be constantly available and the "fear of missing out" (FOMO) can lead to heightened anxiety and stress.



How parents can help

Parents can play a crucial role in helping their children reclaim their focus. Here are some tips you can try:

- **Create a distraction-free zone:** Encourage your teen to put their phone in another room while they are doing homework. Even having a phone nearby can make it harder to focus.
- **Cultivate new habits:** Suggest that your teen start by deliberately ignoring notifications for a short period and gradually increase the duration over time. Or try other forms of regular digital detox.
- **Prioritise and visualise goals:** Help your teen write down their goals on a sticky note and place it somewhere visible. This helps them visualise the positive outcome of completing a task.
- **Promote well-being:** Ensure your teen is getting enough sleep. A well-rested brain is better equipped to focus and resist distraction. Parents are also advised to encourage breaks and outdoor time. By taking regular breaks and spending time outdoors, teens could help reset their minds and improve focus.
- **Be a role model:** Most importantly, parent should walk the talk. Limit your own use of phone and gadgets and follow the rules you set up for your child.

Ultimately, helping our teens navigate this digital landscape isn't about eliminating technology, but about teaching them mindful use and digital self-control. By implementing these strategies, we can empower them to reclaim their focus, improve their well-being and thrive both in and out of the digital world. PP

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BEFORE THEIR FIRST CRY

WILL YOU PROTECT THEIR FIRST BREATH?



RSV

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) is one of the leading causes of severe lung infections, hospitalisations, and even death in babies under six months^{1,2}.

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-  Made space in your home
-  Ask your doctor about their first protection against RSV



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Image is for representation only

ICU: Intensive Care Unit

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PP-UNP-MYS-0648-30JUL2025

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