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March 2017 | S\$5.00
motherhood.com.sg

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Magazine

D I G I T A L E D I T I O N

STAY SAFE

 **MEDICATION IN PREGNANCY – TO POP OR NOT?**

 **REDUCE SCHOOL SICK DAYS NOW**

“MUMMY, WHERE ARE YOU?”

WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOUR CHILD GETS LOST IN A CROWD

 **SPOT THE SIGNS OF AUTISM**



Contents

March 2017



bump + beyond

12 Get into Position

Sex during pregnancy doesn't have to be uncomfortable. Know which positions are best for you and your bump.

15 Body & Mind: The Benefits of Fish Oil During Pregnancy

Just how beneficial is fish oil during pregnancy? *MH* finds out.

16 Safe Medications for Pregnancy

When dealing with various ailments during pregnancy, how do you know which medications are safe for you and your unborn baby? *MH* finds out.



19 Pregnancy Food Myths

You may have heard that eating crab while pregnant will cause you to have an active child or that not satisfying your pregnancy cravings will give you a greedy child, is there any truth in this? *MH* sets out to debunk these myths and more.

22 Real Life: The Child Who Will Never Grow Up

For parents John and Joan, life has thrown them numerous challenges but they've managed to see the good in all the hurdles they've encountered.



early years

32 Surviving the First Few Weeks

Read our survival guide to get the latest tips on dealing with your newborn baby. From bathing to crying — here's what every parent needs to know.

35 Essential First Aid Every Mum Needs to Know Now

Most accidents happen at home. Do you know what to do in case of an emergency?

38 Ah-choo! Mummy, I'm Sick!

Are you familiar with common childhood illnesses like pneumococcal disease, rotavirus and pertussis? If not, *MH* has all you need to know about these illnesses and more.

42 Tell-tale Signs of Autism

Worried your child may be autistic? Here are the warning signs to look out for.



06
Know: What's Happening?

07
The Shelf

08
Watch this space

10
Step Out

30
Fab Finds

61
Know: Mummy News

the zone



24 style sense



46



54



64



tasty treats

72
What's on the Menu?

experts say

11
40 Weeks

41
Mind Your Manners

57
First Classroom

in every issue

05
Ed Says

74
Babes & Bubs

80
Subscription

juniors

- 44 We Try, You Try: And all that Jazz...**
MH visits one of Singapore's newest Jazz Dance school to learn more.
- 46 Life Skills You Need to Teach Your Kids**
MH shares some of the most important life skills and values your child needs to learn now.
- 50 8 Reasons why Preschool Education is Important**
Ever wonder why so much emphasis is place on preschool education? *MH* finds out why.
- 54 "Help Me, I'm Lost!"**
If you're out and your child gets lost in the crowd, you want to be sure you equip him with these smart and safe tips.
- 58 Reduce School Sick Days**
Keep your kids healthy with these smart and simple tips.



modern mums

- 62 Mums@Work: Cutting it as a Mum**
How a work-from-home hairstylist — with a toddler in tow — is living life on her own terms.
- 64 Working It**
Here are some useful tips for working from home and actually being able to get things done.
- 67 6 Things You Should Never Post Online**
Be careful what you post online. Some information and photos may be revealing more than you mean to.
- 68 Mummy Money-saving Tips & Tricks**
It doesn't hurt to be able to save money whenever you can. Want some some money-saving strategies that you could actually use? Read on!
- 70 We Love... Pamper Yourself**



cover

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Safe Medications for Pregnancy

When dealing with various ailments during pregnancy, how do you know which medications are safe for you and your unborn baby? **MH** finds out.

■ WORDS **RACHEL LIM**

Motherhood speaks to Dr Tan Toh Lick, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Thomson Women's Clinic; and Dr Lim Min Yu, consultant, National University Hospital Women's Centre, to find out more on the safe medications for you and your unborn baby when dealing with various ailments.

Pain

Pain is an important symptom to alert your obstetrician. One of this is Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP). This pain around the front and/or back of the pelvis is common in pregnancy, affecting about 20 per cent of women particularly later in pregnancy. The pain is due to strain on the pelvic joints and can also affect other areas such as the hips or thighs. An assessment by your specialist is required before diagnosing PGP. Typically the pain is triggered by movement such as walking, rolling

over in bed and during sexual intercourse.

What to Do About it?

- ❁ Avoid lifting heavy objects.
- ❁ Try to keep both legs together when turning over in bed or getting in and out of the car.
- ❁ Strengthening your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles to improve posture and stabilise the spine will also improve PGP.

Dr Tan adds that using a support belt, hydrotherapy and acupuncture may also be useful. "If these measures are inadequate, pain relief such as paracetamol is effective and safe in pregnancy."

Constipation

Constipation is very common in pregnancy, affecting almost 40 per cent of women.

What to Do About it?

In mild cases, increasing exercise, as well as fluid and fibre intake, may resolve the problem. For women taking iron supplements, stopping temporarily if appropriate may relieve symptoms.

Dr Tan points out that in cases not helped by conservative measures, laxatives may be considered. "Osmotic laxatives such as lactulose and bulk forming drugs such as Ispaghula husk are safe for use in pregnancy. Stimulant laxatives such

In severe cases, mobility might become very restricted. This can compound the risk of developing blood clots in the leg veins. As such you may be advised to wear compression stockings and have heparin injections.

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Surviving the First Few Weeks

Read our survival guide to get the latest tips on dealing with your newborn baby. From bathing to crying — here's what every parent needs to know. ■ WORDS **ANGEL DREWGUS**

The first six to eight weeks of your baby's life is a learning period. You don't have to worry about anything other than getting through it as best you can. To say it takes time adapting to such a challenging new role is definitely an understatement. There will be times when it all seems so hard you wonder if you can cope at all, but you know what, you will. Here are some tips to help you manage this whole new world of motherhood better.

Time for a Feed

If you're a new mummy, you must be wondering if your baby is getting enough milk, and especially if you're breastfeeding, it's impossible to count the number of ounces. Not to worry! All you have to do is ensure your baby is well attached to the breast to receive enough milk. Another way to know if your baby is getting enough breast milk is by monitoring his urine and stool output. A general guide would be six to eight wet diapers and two to five bowel movements every 24 hours after a week old, explains Kang Phaik Gaik, head parentcraft/lactation, Mount Alvernia Hospital.

If you're planning on giving your baby formula as well, it isn't necessary. Says Kang, for breastfeeding mothers, formula should be avoided unless medically indicated that does not allow for total breastfeeding. How much formula a newborn needs then depends on the age and size of the baby.

Burp!

You'll be surprised to know that breastfed babies do not require much burping. Burping your baby before breastfeeding or before changing to the second breast may encourage baby to receive more breastmilk.

However, it is important to burp formula fed babies in between feeds and at the end of the feeding advises Kang.

Air is usually swallowed during feeding or crying. This can cause discomfort to your baby and reduce his milk intake if the baby is not burped properly.

Calming Cries

There are different types of baby cries. Not every cry is a hunger cry. Parents need to listen to their baby's cries and observe their baby's behaviour, movements, body language and facial expression and understand why their baby is crying and respond accordingly. By responding quickly and appropriately to your baby's cries, it is easier to calm your baby and help build your baby's sense of trust and security, explains Kang.

Hush, little one

A cuddle can do wonders to soothe your crying baby if there is nothing physically wrong. Don't forget that your baby will need a few months to adjust to the new environment and a newborn baby needs a lot of your nurturing touch to develop well physically and psychologically. Your baby is likely to respond and calm down immediately if you comfort and soothe him when he cries. If he is left to cry longer, it is more difficult to calm him down, says Kang.

When your baby cries, respond to his cry, talk to him, cuddle him, hold him close and upright against your

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Essential First Aid Every Mum Needs to Know

Most accidents happen at home. Do you know what to do in case of an emergency?

WORDS **CHRISTEL GERALYN GOMES**

Being a parent can be scary enough, but throw in a medical emergency into the mix and you could have a reason to panic. You've probably already mastered the art of blowing on a scratch or kissing away a booboo, but beyond that, do you have the first aid skills essential for emergencies? Read on to find out what you need to know.

CPR

Perhaps one of the skills most likely to save your child's life is knowing how to correctly perform CPR.

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Tell-tale Signs of Autism

Worried your child may be autistic? Here are the warning signs to look out for. ■ WORDS **ANGEL DREWGUS**



The autism spectrum is very broad, ranging from a brilliant scientist to a person who remains with a severe disability. It is true that some people with ASD are geniuses, but not everyone is. Autism is all around us. Early identification of ASD and early provision of treatment can improve outcomes for many affected children.

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is genetic in origin. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) causes children to have communication and social difficulties. Most children with ASD have a language delay, explains Dr Kang Ying Qi, consultant, Child Development Unit, National University Hospital. Children without delays in language may not effectively use language in daily or social situations. Socialisation is affected, so is play, imagination and learning (the child is unable to contextualise and apply daily social experiences to make connections in learning). Children with ASD

have varying intellectual abilities. Some children have average to high intelligence while some can have an intellectual disability. They also have restricted interests and can be rigid in their ways. Some children may display atypical behaviours. It is a life-long condition, although the symptoms and behaviours often change as the child grows.

What Causes Autism?

There is no one cause of autism, says Dr Kang. Most cases of autism appear to be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors that may affect brain development before or around the time of birth, which may alter brain connections or chemicals.

Autism is not caused by a child's upbringing and social circumstances. It is not due to the fault of the individual with autism.

There are some who believe that oral supplements or special diets can help reduce autistic behaviour but this has not yet been proven with well-conducted trials and we cannot comment on its safety and usefulness currently, clarifies Dr Kang.

Research suggests that there is a genetic component but the exact genes involved remain unknown. In recent years, childhood immunisations have been blamed for causing Autism but this myth has been largely debunked.

A child may also inherit a gene(s) and some families may have several family members who have an ASD or show some ASD characteristics.

Early Warning Signs of Autism

In very young children, it may be difficult to see the signs of autism; however, there are some 'red flags' to look out for. Children with ASD may show differences in the way they develop particularly with their social and communication skills, although they do not have exactly the same



“HELP ME, I’M LOST!”

If you’re out and your child gets lost in the crowd, you want to be sure you equip him with these smart and safe tips. ■ WORDS **SUE-ANN BAUMGÄRTEL**



When my son was four years old, he got lost in a big department store during a Christmas shopping trip. Amongst all the lights and rows of toys, we had somehow lost each other. One minute I had him in the corner of my eye, while I was checking out a present, and the next minute, he was gone. However, in the time between me realising he was gone to looking around for him, an announcement on the loudspeaker played out over the paused piped-in Christmas songs. “Will the mother of Maxim – the mother of Maxim – please come to the cash register? The mother of Maxim, please.” This was like the voice of God speaking, and I ran to the counter to find my son sitting next to the lady at the till, calming waiting for me.

I don’t consciously remember talking to my son about staying safe in crowded areas, let alone equipping

him with a plan of action to follow in such an event. My pride in his mature and calm handling of the situation was immense. The story had a happy ending. I also subsequently learnt that there are certain situations that simply cannot be left to chance. And one of these situations is how to stay safe and streetwise while out and about. Luck was on my side that day.

Getting lost is a frightening and traumatic experience not only for the child but also for the parents. While for the majority of the time, both parents and child will be safely reunited, the dangers of sinister or criminal intent should not be underestimated.

Children are vulnerable members of our society and should be protected and respected. Being streetwise is a vital life skill, which should be like second nature, as your child grows and matures. Here are some ideas on how to tackle this task.

Prevention

A new shopping centre, a foreign city or airport, or simply walking down Orchard Road to enjoy the lights – amongst the hustle and bustle of such settings it is all too easy to lose sight of your child. Being conscious of certain points can help should you get separated.

- ✿ Dress your kids in bright and easily recognisable clothes. When my kids were younger and I was travelling alone with them, I would try to match their outfits – all in red, all stripes, for example.

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