

# Raffles HealthNews

A PUBLICATION BY *RafflesMedicalGroup*



## Welcome to Parenthood

***It's Complicated!***  
***Pregnancy red flags***  
***and more***

## The Miracle Of Life: From Embryo to Baby

## Infertility Treatments: East Meets West

**Inside:  
Mum & Baby  
Bonding  
Exercises**

Scan here to see our videos for  
the latest healthcare tips!



[youtube.com/RafflesHospital](https://youtube.com/RafflesHospital)





## Balance Your Body & Mind With Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a well-established system of medicine which represents the accumulated clinical experience of many practitioners over 5,000 years of Chinese history.

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In line with Raffles' Group Practice philosophy, our physicians work closely with our western medicine doctors to co-manage patients in areas of fertility and women's health, pain management and cancer complementary care, integrating both eastern and western medicine, to provide the best care for our patients.

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**Consultation &  
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\* Valid for first time  
patients in Raffles Holland  
V only \* Other terms and  
conditions apply

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Shaw Centre, Singapore 228208  
**Tel:** 6838 0122  
**Email:** [cm\\_shawcentre@rafflesmedical.com](mailto:cm_shawcentre@rafflesmedical.com)

**Raffles Holland V**  
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[www.rafflesmedicalgroup.com/chinese-medicine](http://www.rafflesmedicalgroup.com/chinese-medicine)



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# Raffles HealthNews

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 6385 2154  
 6853 7703  
 6702 6917  
 6838 0080  
 6442 0488  
 6462 3426  
 6260 5116  
 6254 7667  
 6585 1279  
 6384 5655  
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 6891 0255  
 6385 5067  
 6241 8866  
 6790 0360  
 6769 0641  
 6636 3780  
 6339 7800  
 6386 7191  
 6255 2722  
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\* Specialist dental services

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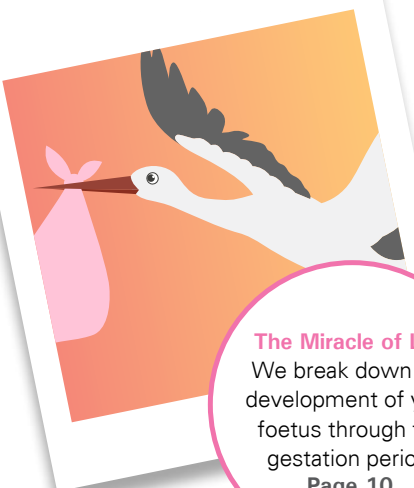
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# Hello Readers!



**The Miracle of Life**  
We break down the development of your foetus through the gestation period.  
**Page 10**



**Fertility Herb Guide**  
Our physician shares a recipe to boost your fertility.  
**Page 23**



**Shape of a Mother**  
Recover from your biggest post-pregnancy body issues.  
**Page 30**

I have the privilege of being the proud dad of two rather rascally and active kids. I have a son who is five and a 2-year-old diva. My wife would agree that they are the best gifts that have ever been given to us and we appreciate the challenges and joy these two little humans bring us for the rest of our lives.

I remember when we first brought home Ben. We stared at him for hours sleeping soundly in his little cot. I admit being rather scared. You realise that your life changes in an instant when you become parents. No one gives you the knowledge to become great parents overnight. Your kid does not come with an instruction manual. You learn things through trial and error. In this issue, we look into some of the more important things to note when planning for a family.

You are trying yet the positive sign is nowhere in sight. Fret not, you are not alone. In fact, humans are one of the least fertile creatures on earth. It is estimated that at least 10 to 15 per cent of couples fail to conceive within their first year of attempt. Find out more about infertility (see pages 12 and 13) and the treatments available (see pages 14 and 15).

If you are already pregnant, congratulations! Our medical experts share more on the complications, essential tests and how to overcome any disappointments (see pages 16 to 19). The journey to parenthood is sometimes emotional one. Learn how to manage your emotions during and after pregnancy (see page 22). We also share how to eat right for a pregnant woman and a new mummy (see pages 24 to 27).

Whether you are planning or are already a parent, give yourself a pat on your back. You have made a great leap of courage to sacrifice for parenthood. It is a wonderful experience to see your child grow to be an adult. As they say, you never know how much you can love until you become a parent.

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**healthnews@rafflesmedical.com**

**Dr Melvyn Wong**  
Family Physician, Consultant  
Raffles Medical



## New Docs on the Block

We warmly welcome Dr Lee to the Raffles family! With his addition, we hope to better serve your healthcare needs.

**Dr Lee Seng Swim**  
**Specialist in Internal Medicine**  
**Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre**



With over 20 years of clinical experience, Dr Lee attained his MBBS from the University of Sydney (1996), MRCP (UK) in 2004, and Certificate of Specialist Accreditation (Internal Medicine) in 2007. He subsequently went for training in Bioethics at the University of Sydney in 2008, and was conferred Master of Bioethics (Honours) in 2009. His clinical achievement has been recognised and was awarded FRCP (Edinburgh) in 2015.

Before joining Raffles Hospital, Dr Lee has worked for six years as a consultant in Internal Medicine at Singapore General Hospital. During his tenure in SGH, he has provided comprehensive holistic care to his patients in a patient-centric manner.

## Expanding Medical Horizons



Slated to be ready by the end of this year, Raffles Hospital's new medical tower will be 20-storey high with two basements. The new medical tower and existing hospital building at North Bridge Road will constitute an integrated medical complex well-positioned to meet the changing healthcare needs of patients.

In addition, we are pleased to announce that the Raffles Hospital Extension project was awarded the BCA Green Mark Platinum Award by the Building and Construction Authority. On this note, we hope the new extension can better serve the increasing needs of the community by providing quality care and service.

## Put a Stop to Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer arises from the lining of the colon or rectum, usually from cells that secrete mucus. In many cases, it starts out as a polyp, which is a premalignant, benign lesion or an overgrowth in the lining of the colon. If left alone, a polyp can grow into cancer.

Early detection can save your life. In Singapore, colorectal cancer is the most common cancer in males and the second most common cancer in females. If you are aged 50 and above, take a few minutes today to test for colorectal cancer.

Raffles Hospital will be offering FOBT (Faecal Occult Blood Test) kits and screenings in 2017. Collect your FOBT test kit from Raffles Hospital or any Raffles Medical clinics today. Call 6311 1152 to find out more.

*\*Terms and conditions apply.*



**Both men and women are at equal risk of developing colorectal cancer**



**Colorectal cancer often starts with no symptoms.**



**People with a first-degree relative who has colorectal cancer have two to three times higher risk of developing it.**



**Colorectal cancer is very treatable and highly curable if detected early.**

## Opening of Hillion Mall

Our clinic at Hillion Mall is now open. The clinic offers a mix of medical and dental services.

### Address

15 Petir Road  
#02-07/08  
Singapore 678270

### Telephone

6769 0571 (GP)  
6769 0641 (Dental)



### Operating Hours

#### Family Medicine

Mon to Fri  
8.30am to 1.00pm  
2.00pm to 5.30pm  
6.30pm to 9.30pm

Sat & Sun  
8.30am - 1.00pm

#### Dental

Tue & Thu  
8.30am to 1.00pm  
2.00pm to 5.30pm  
6.30pm to 9.30pm

Mon, Fri & Sat  
8.30am - 1.00pm  
2.00pm - 5.30pm

## Continuing to Serve Your Healthcare Needs in Bedok

With effect from 1 March 2017, our former clinic at Bedok Mall will be relocating to a new clinic at Bedok North.

### Address

Block 203  
Bedok North Street 1  
#01-467  
Singapore 460203

### Telephone

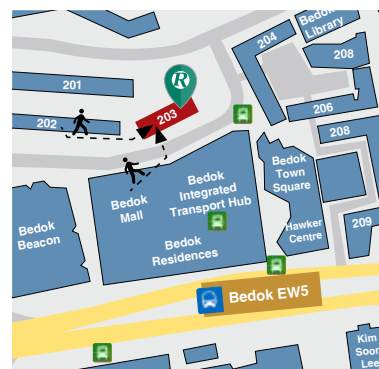
6441 1736

### Operating Hours

#### Family Medicine

Mon to Fri  
8.30am to 1.00pm  
2.00pm to 5.30pm  
6.30pm to 9.30pm

Sat, Sun & PH  
8.30am - 1.00pm



## Know Your Fertility Potential

Many women go through life without knowing about the status of their fertility potential. The lower the egg reserve a woman has, the lower her chances of conceiving.

While some women are still fertile in their mid-thirties, there are others who may run out of eggs at an earlier age. Both an ultrasound scan of the ovaries and a special egg reserve blood test can be used to assess your fertility potential.

### Fertility Screening for Women @ \$333 (includes GST)

- Consultation by Fertility Specialist
- Ultrasound Scan
- Egg Reserve Blood Test

#### Terms and Conditions:

- Package is not applicable with other discounts or promotions
- Only available for new patients with no history of treatment or investigation done
- Screening excludes medication and other investigations





## Travel Health Consultation and Vaccinations

Travel worry-free! Before embarking on your holidays, do seek your doctor's advice on the relevant vaccinations.

For enquiries, please call **6311 2222**.

- Flu vaccination at \$26.75 per dose
- Pneumococcal vaccination to prevent infection from pneumococcus bacteria at \$68 per dose
- Hepatitis A and B (Twinrix) vaccination at \$90 per dose (3 doses in total)

**Terms and conditions:**

- Prices quoted include GST
- Prices of vaccinations exclude doctor's consultation
- Available at Raffles Medical clinics in Singapore only
- Listed prices and terms are subject to changes without prior notice



## Performing your Umrah in comfort and ease



If you are travelling to Saudi Arabia for the Umrah pilgrimage, the main vaccine required for travellers from Singapore is meningococcal vaccine. It can help you focus on performing your Umrah with peace of mind.

**Meningococcal vaccination at \$52**

For general enquiries or an appointment, please call **6311 2222**.

**Terms and conditions:**

- Prices quoted include GST
- Prices of vaccinations exclude doctor's consultation
- Available at Raffles Medical clinics in Singapore only
- Listed prices and terms are subject to changes without prior notice

## Let Your Smile Dazzle!



A whiter set of teeth invariably brightens your smile and improves your looks. It is possible to attain whiter teeth through teeth whitening by yourself at home. Take the first step to achieving your winning smile today.

**Professional Take-home Teeth Whitening Package at \$482\***

For more information or to make an appointment, please call our appointment hotline at **6311 2360**, or email us at [dental@raffleshospital.com](mailto:dental@raffleshospital.com).

\* Price includes GST, and does not include consultation costs, consumable charges and any other dental treatments



## Raffles Holland V

Nestled in an intimate setting, Raffles Holland V houses a diverse mix of tenants ranging from food and beverage, beauty, fitness and lifestyle offerings.



Virgin Active



Hoshino Coffee



Haakon Superfoods & Juice



Sushi Tei



Otto's Deli Fresh



Laundry Club

### Level 5

Raffles Medical Centre

### Level 4

Virgin Active (opening soon)

### Level 3

Sushi Tei

The Nailist (opening soon)

Virgin Active (opening soon)

### Level 2

Otto's Deli Fresh

Hoshino Coffee

Raffles Health

DBS Branch

DBS Treasures Centre

### Level 1

Café O

Soup Restaurant

Haakon Superfoods & Juice

Provence

DBS Self Service Banking Lobby

Patissez

Beauty Kitchen by Face Bistro Level

### Basement 1

Laundry Club

Taste (opening soon)

## Free Wi-Fi access for patients and visitors

We are always looking to improve our hospital environment for patients and visitors. You can now enjoy the free wireless network at Raffles Hospital and Raffles Medical clinics.

Steps:

- To log in with your smartphone, check that your Wi-Fi is on.
- Select 'Raffles Hospital' or 'Raffles Medical' from the available network list.
- Follow the instructions on your screen.



## Raffles Hospital Welcomes Eight New Year Babies



We welcome the arrival of eight newborn babies into the world as we usher in 2017. The new year couldn't have kicked in a better way for the parents! Of which, six were delivered by Dr Jazlan Joosoph, Specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Raffles Women's Centre.



By Magdalene Lee



From cells to a baby, that is the miracle of life. Dr Tony Tan, who subspecialises in foetal medicine, breaks down the development of your foetus through the 40 weeks.

*Dr Tony Tan, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre*



### Weeks 1 to 3

You are pregnant and you may not even know it yet! Your baby's basic respiratory, digestive, circulatory, nervous and excretory systems are being formed.

## EMBRYONIC DEVELOPMENT



### Weeks 4 to 8

Your baby is about the size of an ant. The brain, spinal cord and heart are developing, as well as its limbs. The umbilical cord is connected and you will be able to hear your baby's first heartbeat!



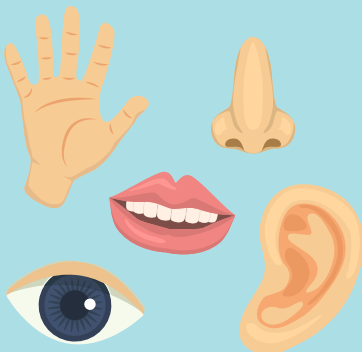
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hic hic

### Weeks 9 to 12

Your baby's vital organs are developed and his bones are hardening. He can move his limbs. And can you feel your baby's first hiccups?

## THE BEGINNING

## FOETAL GROWTH



### Weeks 22 to 25

Your baby is as big as a coconut and weighs a pound. His five senses are forming and getting stronger each day. His vocal cords have developed and he can recognise your voice.

## MOVE IT, BABY!

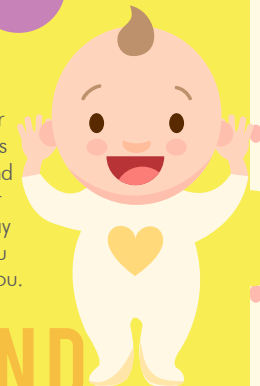
### Weeks 18 to 21

Ready or not, you will be feeling flutters in your tummy, specifically, your baby's fluttering movements (aka quickening). If the suspense is killing you and you have been badly wanting to know your unborn child's gender, now is the time to find out!



### Weeks 13 to 17

Congratulations! Your baby's internal organs have been formed and will mature in the next two trimesters. He may not be able to see you yet but he can hear you.



## SECOND TRIMESTER

## SENSE AND SENSIBILITY



### Weeks 26 to 30

Hello third trimester! Your baby is now two pounds and capable of sucking his thumb. His eyes are blinking and he is breathing. He would also be sleeping. Watch out for his powerful kicks when he's awake.

## READY, SET, GROW!

### Weeks 31 to 34

He's now three pounds and the size of a melon. His weight gain will accelerate to a pound and a half per week until birth. Your body is sending him antibodies to protect him from infection.



### Weeks 35 to birth

Finally after a long wait, you will be meeting your child! To prepare for delivery, your baby will turn in your uterus positioning his head downward. Once your cervix dilates to 10 cm, he will pass through the birth canal and enter the world.

## OH MY SLEEPING CHILD

## WELCOME TO EARTH

# Where's the baby?

You don't want to remember the number of times you took a pregnancy test. What matters is the positive sign. **By Queenie Ho**

Sometimes, life is too ironic to understand. Despite being ready to start a family and trying hard to conceive, nothing seems to happen. We speak to Dr Seng Shay Way, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre and Dr Lim Kok Bin, Specialist in Urology & Consultant, Raffles Urology Centre as they cover the topic on infertility.

## Infertility

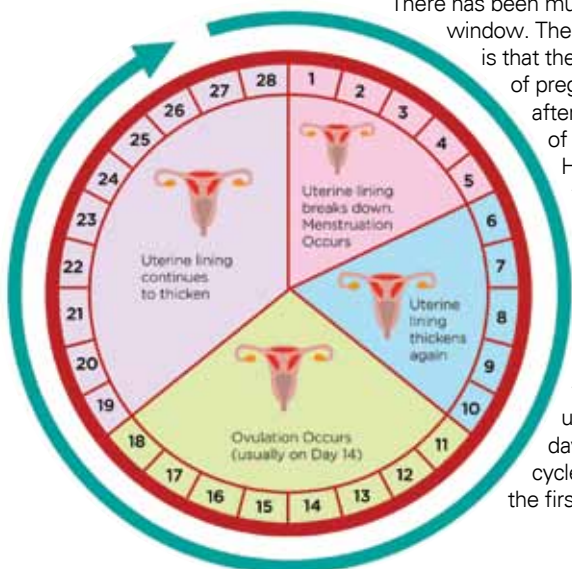
You gave up on alcohol and have been exercising a lot to drop the excess weight but the pregnancy test kit is still negative. So the big question is: "Are you infertile?"

Infertility is defined as being unable to get pregnant despite having frequent, unprotected sex for at least a year for most couples and affects about 15 per cent of Singapore's population. Infertility can occur in both males and females.

### The Right Timing

There has been much talk about the fertile window. The common knowledge is that there is a greater chance of pregnancy just before or after the ovulation stage of the menstrual cycle. However, pinpointing the exact moment is not easy as it varies with different women and different months.

If a woman has regular 28-day cycles, the "fertile window" is usually from day 11 to day 18 of her menstrual cycle, with day one being the first day of the bleed.



### When to Seek Help?

Starting a family is a big undertaking, the stress level increases when a couple is faced with fertility problems. Don't be afraid to seek help and talk to a medical professional! Your doctor will schedule tests based on your situation and medical history.



Therefore, not all tests may be required, and they may be done in a different order. Seek help early if you satisfy the following conditions:

- Female partner above 35 years old
- Irregular or absent periods
- Two or more miscarriages
- Previous pelvic or testicular surgery
- Painful menstruation
- Major illnesses
- Not pregnant despite one year of trying





## The Typical Fertility Evaluation

	
Common Fertility Problems	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low sperm count or poor sperm quality</li><li>• Erectile dysfunction</li><li>• Blockage in the tube that carries sperm from the testicles, genetic cause or hormones problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hormonal problems</li><li>• Early menopause</li><li>• Fallopian tubes blockage</li><li>• Pelvic infection (chlamydia or gonorrhoea)</li></ul>
Common Risk Factors of Infertility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Age:</b> Older women produce lesser and lower quality of eggs. Testosterone levels dip as men gets older</li><li>• <b>Alcohol:</b> Alcohol abuse leads to lower male and female fertility</li><li>• <b>Smoking:</b> The risk of infertility in both men and women is higher in smokers than non-smokers.</li><li>• <b>Obesity:</b> Being overweight increase the risk of infertility and affect the sperm count for the male.</li><li>• <b>Sedentary lifestyle:</b> Insufficient exercise contributes to obesity, which increases the risk of infertility. Women who over-exercise may have ovulation problems too.</li></ul>	
Medical History	
<p>Your doctor will interview you while taking your medical histories, including asking about conditions that have a bearing on fertility, such as hormone imbalance, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases or thyroid diseases. Provide a full account of any medication that you've taken or are taking and answer questions that may concern your sex life, such as timing and frequency of intercourse, and the reproductive histories of your parents and siblings.</p>	
Physical Exam	
<p>The couple will be asked to undergo a general physical exam, including a gynaecological check-up for the female. Examining the testicles is most important as it determines the most possible cause of the male fertility problem.</p>	
<b>Semen Analysis</b> <p>Low sperm count or poor sperm quality is the culprit in roughly 30 to 40 per cent of infertility cases. One of the possible preliminary tests to conduct can be semen analysis. An semen sample is collected and further tested whether it is normal by analysing its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• shape</li><li>• appearance</li><li>• motility (activity level)</li><li>• sperm count</li></ul>	<b>Hormone Screening</b> <p>Either blood or urine will be tested to check the various hormones levels necessary for ovulation and ovarian reserve.</p> <b>Pelvic Ultrasound Exam</b> <p>This painless procedure uses ultrasound waves to examine the body's interior. Ultrasound gives the doctor information about the ovaries, the uterus, and the follicles that hold eggs prior to ovulation. Ultrasound usually can detect fibroid, polyps and ovarian cysts.</p>



## Fertility Treatments

If you and your partner are struggling to have a baby, you're not alone. We break down the Eastern and Western fertility treatments available to counter infertility. **By Alan Lim**

### Unearthing the Western Fertility Treatments

In today's modern society, women are pursuing careers, marrying later and postponing motherhood. As for the gentlemen, most would rather focus on their careers first before tying the knot. Dr Sheila Loh, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre, shares more information on this issue, and some treatments to help married couples to get pregnant.

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According to Dr Loh, the ideal age for conception for women is between 22 and 26 years old. "The increase in age also comes with a higher incidence of miscarriages. Sperm quality for men begins to decline after 40 years of age," she added.

On the other hand, medical breakthroughs have made many advances that have helped married couples to conceive. It is important that you and your partner spend some time to plan before starting treatment. Not all treatments for infertility involve "high-tech" procedures. Many couples are successful in maximising their natural fertility potential and with simple treatments and lifestyle changes. Below is an overview of some available treatments to counter infertility issues.

## Traditional Chinese Medicine: Complementing Western Fertility Treatment

Couples struggling with infertility can seek out Traditional Chinese Medicine to support certain fertility problems.



### Acupuncture

"At the heart of TCM is the notion of harmony and balance in our body. From a TCM perspective, infertility is caused by an imbalance of *Qi* (energy) in the body as a result of an unhealthy lifestyle, poor diet, lack of exercise, exposure to toxins, one's genetic disposition, as well as environmental and emotional factors," said Physician Ho Chin Ee, TCM Physician, Raffles Chinese Medicine.

Acupuncture can help boost fertility by increasing blood flow, stimulating the ovaries to produce healthy eggs and enriching the endometrial lining in the uterus. Acupuncture also reduce stress and promote relaxation, which reduces spasms in the uterus and fallopian tube, so an embryo may successfully implant.



### Herbal Formula

Similar to acupuncture, herbal formula is another effective modality for treating infertility issues. A herbal formula is derived from a combination of different herbal medicines. Fertility problems arise due to imbalance in the body and the herbal formula can help to adjust the body's *Qi*, blood and *Jing* back in harmony.

Herbs can strengthen kidney function, regulate liver energy, tonify spleen, increase *Qi* and blood. Examples include *Danggui*, *Huangqi*, *Dangshen*, *Gouqizi*, *Shoudi*, *Yinyanghuo*. "Some patients with fertility problems (be it hormonal or uterine) are able to conceive naturally through the use of such herbal treatments," added Ms Ho.

## WESTERN TREATMENTS

### Female Infertility

Many factors are involved in infertility, so it is essential to correctly diagnose and treat your condition with the help of your doctor. Treatments usually involve medical and/or surgical interventions.

#### Medical treatment:

- Hormonal problems
- Anovulation
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)
- Untreated chlamydia infection

#### Surgery:

- Fibroids
- Endometriosis
- Tubal Disorders

Complementary to the above treatments are advanced assisted reproductive techniques such as:

- Intrauterine Insemination (IUI)
- In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)
- Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI)

Visit our website <http://bit.ly/2kkJKsc> for more information.

### Male Infertility

Treatment for male infertility focuses on detecting and treating reversible causes, halting damaging factors and assisting in advanced reproductive techniques. There are cases where no treatment is available and alternative options may be offered. These are:

#### Medical treatment:

- Hormone deficiency
- Retrograde ejaculation
- Infections
- Intercourse problems

#### Surgical treatment

- Varicocelectomy

# It's Complicated!

By Stanley Wong and Magdalene Lee

Every pregnancy is different. While everyone wishes for a smooth sailing journey, some may experience otherwise. Our experts share more on the symptoms of pregnancy complications, essential screening tests and how to cope with the disappointment after a miscarriage.

## Pregnancy Red Flags

1

### PAIN

While minor cramping is common during early pregnancy, see the doctor if you experience severe abdominal pain. This may be a symptom of an ectopic pregnancy, a possible risk of miscarriage, or an ovarian cyst complication. If it occurs during late pregnancy, it may be a symptom of placental separation, uterine rupture, or even labour pains!

You should note the nature of the pain, its intensity and frequency, and if there are other symptoms to rule out non-pregnancy conditions such as appendicitis or urinary tract infection.

2

### BLEEDING

It is not uncommon to have mild vaginal bleeding in the early stages of pregnancy. Nonetheless, you should note the amount of bleeding, the nature of the blood, and whether it is there is any pain. A quick trip to the doctor can ascertain how the pregnancy is doing.

If the bleeding is heavy, or there is severe pain, it is advisable to visit the doctor immediately. In particular, bleeding during late pregnancy may be due to a low lying placenta, premature placenta separation, or a possible risk of premature labour.

3

### BREATHLESSNESS/ CHEST PAINS

It is common for pregnant women to have episodes of breathlessness. This may happen even while resting. It is usually harmless and resolves itself when you get distracted by other activities. However, if you feel chest pain and your breathing is laboured, or rapid and shallow, see a doctor immediately to exclude underlying heart or lung problems.





## Symptoms that you should be taking note of

# 4

### SEVERE HEADACHES

Mild headaches are common during pregnancy. If you feel other symptoms as well, such as nausea, blurring of vision, abdominal pain, or have high blood pressure during the pregnancy (pre-eclampsia), see a doctor immediately. This may be a sign of an impending seizure (eclamptic fit). If it pre-eclampsia, your baby may have to be delivered early.

# 5

### VOMITING

Some degree of nausea and vomiting is common. Dehydration may occur if you cannot retain any food or even water. If normal anti-vomiting medication does not work, and you feel very weak and lethargic, see a doctor and consider admitting to the hospital for an IV drip. Severe vomiting may indicate an underlying bladder infection or thyroid disease.

# 6

### LEG SWELLING WITH PAIN AND REDNESS

Most pregnant women experience leg swelling due to water retention. If you see redness and pain, it could be a sign of deep vein thrombosis. Book an appointment with your doctor to exclude this. Pregnant women also have a higher risk of developing blood clots, which can be life threatening if it dislodges and travels to the lungs.

# Essential Screening Tests during Pregnancy

Your doctor may recommend some tests to give you a peace of mind and ensure a smooth delivery during your pregnancy. If there are complications, these tests help you and your doctor decide the next steps, which may include further testing. Dr Jazlan Joosoph, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre, shares some of them.

## 1 NUCHAL TRANSLUCENCY TEST

Also called the NT screen, this is done during your first trimester, when you are 11 to 14 weeks pregnant. It is an ultrasound that evaluates your baby's risk of Down Syndrome, chromosomal abnormalities and heart problems.



## 4 ROUTINE BLOOD TESTS

Blood tests are mostly done at the end of the first trimester. These tests set the groundwork for the rest of your pregnancy by detecting any underlying health issues the pregnant mother may have. It screens your body for the full blood count, blood group, antibody screening, as well as checking for evidence of infection or gestational diabetes.



## 2 CTG SCAN

The CTG scan is usually done during the third trimester. This scan monitors the foetus' heart rate to ensure that your baby gets adequate oxygen from the placenta and monitor for signs of delivery.



## 5 NON-INVASIVE PRENATAL TESTING (NIPT)

The NIPT test is a fairly new screening test, also used to detect the likelihood of Down Syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities. It is the most accurate test for Down Syndrome, which can be done earlier in your pregnancy, after 10 weeks.



## 3 ULTRASOUND TEST

Done over the course of your pregnancy, the ultrasound test monitors the foetal growth and detects any structural abnormalities.



# Overcoming the Disappointment of a Miscarriage

Almost 10 to 20 per cent of all pregnancies end in a miscarriage. However, according to Dr Tony Tan, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre, most miscarriages occurring in the first three months are not preventable, as these are foetuses that usually have chromosomal abnormalities or severe structural abnormalities. Dr Tan advises on how to respond if you or your loved one is affected.

## Mums



While physical pain can easily be treated, the same cannot be said for emotional pain. Some women take two weeks to recover, while others take months, or even years. Because many mums review the sequence of events leading to the miscarriage in their minds and blame themselves for it; knowing and understanding the causes of miscarriages can reduce the pain.

## Dads



Dads tend to be ignored during miscarriages. While some dads feel detached, there are others experiencing sadness as well. They need to understand the reasons for the miscarriage, which may not be due to activities caused by them. While both parents should grieve together; some dads may want to rationalise miscarriages, which mums may not appreciate. Just grieving and coming out of it together is the best way.

## Relatives & Friends



Rather than rationalising why miscarriages happen, a simple "I am sorry about your loss" would do. Avoid giving advice or reasons for it, as they may not be scientific. It can even cause the parents to blame themselves or each other for the miscarriage, when the reason was due to chance. For example, patients have often confided that they felt very guilty as friends or relatives have suggested that they have miscarried because they were too stressed at work, or because they had taken certain foods, or done some unusual exercises.

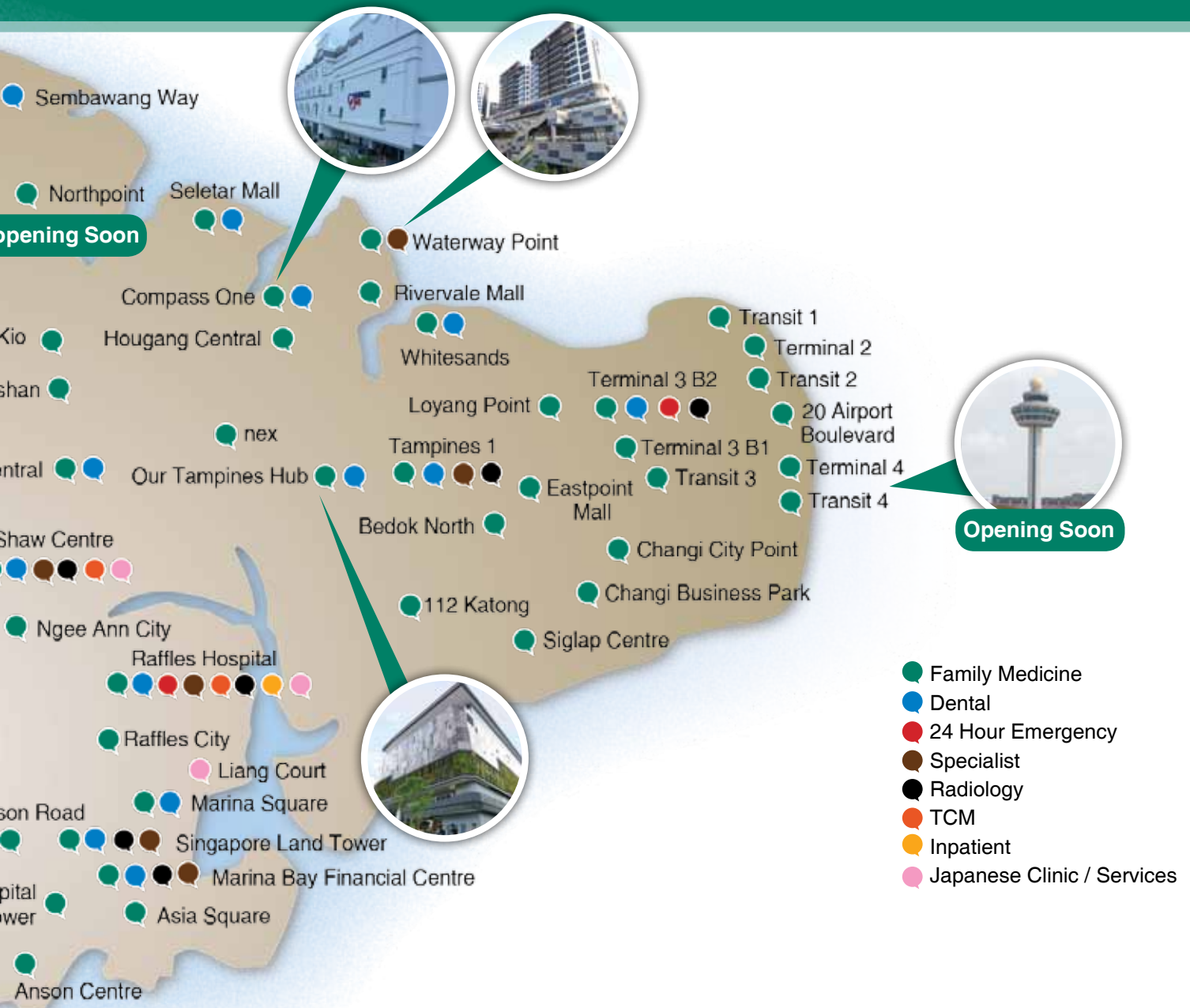
# Serving Your Healthcare



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# SINGING THE BABY BLUES

Courtesy of the Mayo Clinic News Network

Don't be startled if a pregnant woman does not seem joyous and exuberant. While pregnancy is often depicted as a time of joy, that's not the case for all. In fact, depression in women, during and after pregnancy, is more common than many people may realise.

## DEPRESSION

### DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is supposed to be one of the happiest times of a woman's life but it is a time when she goes through a great deal of changes. While most women approach pregnancy with a certain expectation of how the process will make them feel, do expect to see changes not just to the body, but also to the mind too.

Despite the discomfort brought on by the usual cramps, aches and pains — some are often led to believe that the experience will make them glow, and that hormones will stave off depression during pregnancy. Unfortunately, prenatal depression (depression during pregnancy) is very possible, no matter how much the mother is looking forward to her baby's arrival.

Below are some factors that may make you more vulnerable to depression after you become pregnant.

- Past major depressive episodes
- Financial concerns or relationship problems
- Infertility problems or miscarriages in the past
- Recently experienced a significant life change (eg: job loss, breakup, death of a loved one)

### AFTER PREGNANCY

Many new mothers may struggle in managing their emotions and experiencing some form of "baby blues" after giving birth. These "baby blues" symptoms include mood swings, insomnia and anxiety. Typically, these symptoms begin within the first two to three days after delivery, and may last for up to two weeks.

But depression after pregnancy is something that they might not expect. Also known as postpartum depression, some new mothers experience a more severe, long-lasting form of depression. Postpartum depression may be mistaken for baby blues at first — but the signs and symptoms are more intense and last longer, eventually interfering with your ability to care for your baby and handle other daily tasks.

If left untreated, postpartum depression may last for many months or longer. Usually developed within the first few weeks after giving birth but may begin later, some noticeable symptoms include:

- Excessive crying
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Feelings of worthlessness, shame or guilt
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

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# Fertility Herb Guide

Boost your fertility naturally. **By Noel Lee**

The use of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is enjoying growing popularity amongst couples. According to TCM, a long list of foods can help prepare your body to enhance fertility.

## Following a TCM fertility diet

TCM foods such as herbal soups are believed to strengthen the womb and boost overall fertility in women. "They are also easy and convenient to prepare," said Physician Ho Chin Ee, TCM physician, Raffles Chinese Medicine shares a recipe to enhance fertility by nourishing the kidney, as well as supplementing the *Qi* and the blood.



## Eucommia Bark Black Chicken with Black Beans Soup (杜仲黑豆黑鸡汤)

### Ingredients

- Black Beans  
黑豆



- Black Chicken  
乌鸡



- Eucommia Bark  
杜仲  
(Cortex Eucommiae)



- Two-toothed  
Achyranthes Root  
牛膝  
(Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae)



- Chinese Wolfberry  
枸杞子  
(Fructus Lycii)



- Chinese Dates  
大枣  
(Fructus Jujubae)



### Benefits

- Nourishing the kidney and enriching *Yin*
- Invigorating blood and drains water
- Dispelling wind and resolve toxins

- Nourishing the liver and kidney
- Clearing deficient heat
- Enriching the spleen and stomach

- Nourishing the liver and kidney
- Strengthening the tendons and bones
- Calming the foetus

- Invigorating blood and unblocking channels
- Nourishing the liver and kidney
- Strengthening the tendons and bones

- Nourishing the liver and kidney
- Enhancing essence and improving vision

- Supplementing *Qi* and spleen
- Nourishing blood to calm the mind

### Steps

1. Clean and marinate the black chicken with salt. Soak the black beans in water for an hour.
2. Add all the ingredients into a slow cooker pot and bring to boil.
3. Allow the ingredients to boil for approximately 10 minutes. Continue to simmer with low fire for three to four hours.
4. Add some salt to taste and the soup is ready.

### Note

1. The essence from the herbal soup can be efficiently absorbed into our body.
2. Avoid spicy or fried food when taking this nourishing soup.

# FOOD FOR MUMMY

By Noel Lee

When pregnant, do you literally eat for two? How should you eat to get all the nutrients your developing baby needs?

## Folate & Folic Acid

Folate acid is a vitamin that helps prevent neural tube defects, abnormalities of the brain and spinal cord. Folic acid on the other hand, is a synthetic form folate aid that is found in supplements and fortified foods. The intake of folic acid has shown to decrease the preterm delivery along with the same benefits of folate acid.



## Good Sources

## Calcium

Calcium is needed for both mum and baby to develop strong teeth and bones. Calcium also helps your circulatory, muscular and nervous systems to function normally. Calcium is usually found in dairy products but if you are lactose intolerant, there are other ways to include calcium in your diet.

## Good Sources



## Vitamin D

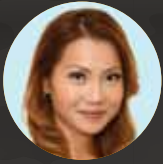
Vitamin D works hand in hand with calcium as it promotes calcium absorption in your body.



## Good Sources







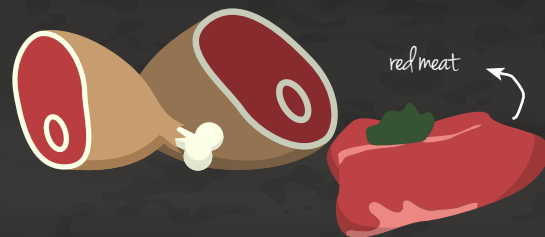
A mother of two, Principal Dietitian of Raffles Hospital, Ms Bibi Chia shares on food to eat and avoid during pregnancy.

## Iron

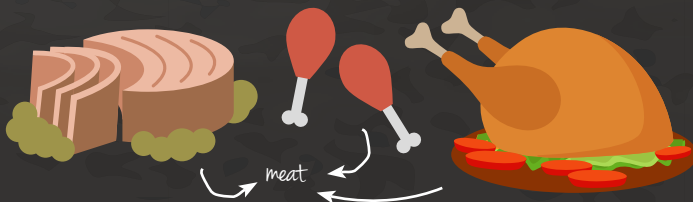
Iron is the vital mineral that aids in blood production. During pregnancy, an additional amount of iron is needed to make more blood to supply the baby with oxygen. Too little iron can lead to anaemia that can result in fatigue and an increased risk of infection.



## Good Sources

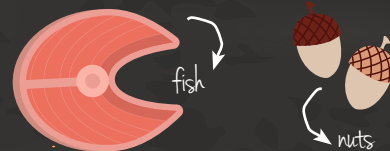


## Good Sources



## Protein

Protein is the “building block” for the baby as it is used to building important organs such as the brain and heart.



## ⊘ Foods to avoid ⊘

When some foods are considered beneficial during pregnancy, some others however are to be avoided as it may contain bacteria, toxicity or viruses that might be harmful to both the mother and the baby.

### Listeria

Listeria is a bacterium that can cause listeriosis in some people. Considered a serious illness, it is especially dangerous for pregnant mothers and their children as it can lead to a miscarriage, premature birth or a stillbirth.

#### **Foods that may contain listeria**

Soft cheeses, pre-made salads, processed meats

### Mercury

If the mother consumes too much mercury, the foetus might end up with brain damage or hearing and vision problems at birth.

#### **Foods that may contain high levels of mercury**

Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, golden / white snapper

### Salmonella

Salmonella is another bacterium that might cause infection across the placenta and produce severe disease and death in the foetus, without affecting the mother. Foetuses infected with salmonella might show signs of an abnormal heart beat and organ failure.

#### **Foods that may contain salmonella**

Raw cookie dough / cake batter, raw or undercooked sprouts, raw eggs

### Parasites

Parasites come in many different forms, ranging from tape worms, flatworms and many other variations. Even though there aren't many cases of parasites affecting the baby, it is better to prevent an infection than try to cure one.

#### **Foods that may contain parasites**

Raw / undercooked fish & meats, raw shellfish



# Confi Best

Learn what constitutes a good confinement diet to ensure sufficient nutrition to both mother and baby. **By Magdalene Lee**

In many parts of Asia, women undergo confinement for a period of time between 30 to 90 days to recuperate after giving birth to a newborn. Many confinement practices have strict guidelines on food to eat and avoid.

According to Ms Bibi Chia, Principal Dietitian, Raffles Hospital, diet during the confinement period is important as new mothers don't just eat for themselves but also for their little ones who are dependent on their mother for breast milk.

The Health Promotion Board recommends that lactating women consume more energy, protein, most vitamins and minerals such as folic acid, Vitamins C, and B12 (iron and calcium). Fluids are also important.

## Key Nutrients for New Mums

**Include these five nutrients in your post-partum diet.**

### Protein - two to three servings daily

\*A serving is equal to 90g of meat or poultry and about 120g of fish.

Good sources:



Meat



Poultry



Seafood



Eggs



Tofu



Low fat cheese



Low fat milk and yoghurt



Legumes and dried beans

\*The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that nursing mothers should avoid eating swordfish, king mackerel, shark or tilefish because of their high mercury content.

### Calcium Needs - 1000mg daily

\* one cup of milk or yoghurt contains over 300 mg of calcium.

Good sources:



Low fat milk or calcium enriched soy milk



Low fat yogurt



Low fat cheese



Calcium fortified tofu



Kale



Broccoli

## Five quick tips

Add 300 calories to normal diet

Three to five meals

Variety

Fiber

Fluid

# nement ^Diet

EatSmart



## Iron - 19mg daily



Meat,  
poultry and  
internal  
organs



Dried beans



Dried fruit



Egg yolks

## Vitamin C - 135mg daily



Citrus fruits



Broccoli



Cantaloupe



Potato



Bell pepper



Tomato



Kiwi

## Fluids - Minimum 8 cups daily



Water



Juice



Milk



Broths and soups



Herbal teas

Limit caffeinated drinks and alcohol as these may be passed through your breast milk to your infant.

## TCM Recipe

**Ms Miao Meng, Consultant TCM Physician, Raffles Chinese Medicine, suggests a recipe that is good for new mums.**



## Papaya and Fish Head Soup

**Ingredients:** ginger 20g, one-half of a fish head, one green papaya, red dates 15g, wolfberry 20g, angelica (*Dang Gui*) 10g, onions 10g, wine 50g, small amount of salt, water 1000ml.

**Preparation:** Peel off the skin of the green papaya and cut into small pieces. Wash the rest of the herbs. Put some oil in the frying pan and fry the ginger and fish head till it turns golden brown. Before placing it in a clay pot, add in green papaya, herbs and water. Next, use high heat to boil the soup and after the broth is boiled, turn it to low heat and let it cook for another 30 minutes. Finally, add in wine, onions and salt before consuming.

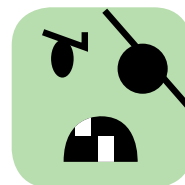
**Benefits:** Fish is rich in proteins while papaya contains enzymes that are effective in lactation. Red dates, wolfberry and angelica helps to nourish blood and revitalise the *Yin* in our body. This dish helps in lactation and is also suitable for new mothers who are lacking in breast milk due to the loss of excessive blood during delivery.

# THE GOODBADUGLY

## pregnancy

Pregnancy is a beautiful time of your life where your body experiences massive changes, all thanks to the little bump that is growing inside you. Most of these are temporary and a result of the hormonal changes. Here's the good, the bad and the ugly of how your body prepares for the conception of your little one.

By Magdalene Lee & Joanna Lee



### HOT FLASHES

You may feel warmer from the third trimester onwards due to the increase in hormonal levels to aid maturity of baby's organs.

### POOR BOWEL MOVEMENT

Constipation is commonly caused by pregnancy hormones. They cause the smooth muscles in your body to relax, including the intestines. As a result, food passes through the intestinal tract more slowly, causing constipation. Although it is tempting to strain your bowels to empty it, avoid doing so, as this may lead to haemorrhoids or piles.

### LOW BACK PAIN

Your growing belly changes your centre of gravity and increases the lumbar kyphosis resulting in back pain. Regular stretching exercises after 24 weeks and swimming can help alleviate the discomfort.

### FORGETFULNESS

The pregnancy brain is a result of your pregnancy hormones (again), stress and less sleep. Research shows that reducing maternal stress levels is helpful to baby's emotional and cognitive development.

### REFLUX & HEARTBURN

Like it or not, progesterone relaxes your stomach valves leading to reflux and heartburn. Try taking smaller meals as over-eating tends to distend the stomach leading to acid reflux. Elevate your head and avoid lying flat if you experience reflux.

### EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Pregnancy brings with it joy and fears. In addition, you may suddenly feel teary or irritated for no apparent reason due to hormonal changes that affect neurotransmitters. Listen to soothing music to calm your soul. It's good for your little one too.



### NESTING

Towards the later weeks of your pregnancy, you may find yourself nesting. This productive period may see you cleaning, washing and prepping like there's no tomorrow. Just stay safe and avoid anything dangerous.



### BEAUTIFUL HAIR & NAILS

You may find that your hair appears thicker and healthier. That said, you may see greater hair fall around three months post-delivery to compensate for the pregnancy period.

### TRANQUILITY

Progesterone is a type of hormone that has a calming effect on the brain. It stimulates the brain's feel-good neurotransmitter that can protect you by easing anxiety and stress.

### PREGNANCY GLOW

You may find yourself glowing during your second trimester. Your skin looks brighter as your blood flow improves during pregnancy.

### BIGGER BOOBS

To aid with breastfeeding, you may notice your breasts enlarging. You may experience some soreness. The breast enlargement is due to the growth of milk ducts to prepare for lactation.

### SKIN CHANGES

Pregnancy can lead to stretch marks, skin growths, hyperpigmentation, spider veins and reddening of the palms. You may also experience acne outbreak and a flare of eczema no thanks to the raging hormones.

### SWELLING

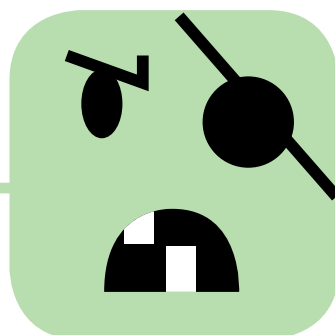
You may notice your feet swelling in the third trimester. As your uterus grows, it compresses your blood flow to the heart leading to swelling. Elevating the legs at night can temporarily reduce the symptoms.

### POOR BLADDER CONTROL

Your expanding uterus puts pressure on your bladder leading to frequent urination and possibly even urine leakage. Pelvic-floor exercises can help to prevent incontinence.

### MORNING SICKNESS

Many women experience nausea and/or vomiting during pregnancy. To alleviate the symptoms, try taking many small meals, supplement with Vitamin B6 or ginger. Avoid oily food that is difficult to digest.



### GINGIVITIS

During pregnancy, gum inflammation is common. You may notice your gums get swollen, sore and bleed easily. Get your teeth checked at least twice during your pregnancy to prevent pregnancy-induced gum diseases.

# The Shape of a Mother

Everyone knows that your body changes during pregnancy, but some of these changes are permanent. The extra pounds, stretch marks or even changes in shoe size may not go away even with exercise and a strict diet. We talk to Dr Tan Siew Kiang on some management strategies of the biggest body issues after pregnancy. **By Queenie Ho**



*"Some things change, some stay the same. Your body changed over a period of nine months during pregnancy, so give it more time to recover. Shift the focus to caring for your new love."*

**Dr Tan Siew Kiang, Specialist in Dermatology & Consultant, Raffles Skin & Aesthetics**

You've dropped most of your baby weight and religiously do stomach crunches, but that belly bulge refuses to budge.

#### Recovery Time

At least nine months

#### What to do if it does not get better

That is most likely stretched-out skin and muscle. Try exercises that target transverse muscles or a rigorous exercise regimen such as an aerobic workout and movements that focus on the abdomen.

#### Quick Fix

Consider shapewear that are made of breathable, nonbinding fabric and are comfy.

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Due to falling estrogen levels after pregnancy, new mums experience hair loss after pregnancy about two to three months after giving birth.

#### Recovery Time

One year from delivery

#### What to do if it does not get better

A gentle shampoo without harmful chemicals will help keep your hair healthy. Eat more iron rich food or take iron supplements would promote hair regrowth.

#### Quick Fix

Snip your tresses. Short hair is prone to lesser hair fall than long hair.

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The scars should look less scary after two weeks. Most will fade to a pencil-thin line but they never completely disappear.

#### Recovery Time

Six weeks to three months, one to two years to fade

#### What to do if it does not get better

Laser therapy can remove discolouration and soften the texture, while steroid injections are useful to flatten bumpy scars.

You can apply silicone gels or creams on your scar. Try to avoid direct sunlight on the scar for the first year and apply sunscreen thereafter.

#### Quick Fix

Trade in your teeny bikini for a suit that provides more coverage.

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Your breasts become fuller and heavier as the pregnancy progresses. The stretched ligaments eventually lead to sagging breasts.

#### Recovery Time

Up to six months after weaning or giving birth.

#### What to do if it does not get better

Exercising can help tone the pectoral muscles around the breasts, giving them a lifted and perkier appearance. Try push-ups, chest fly on your back; pullovers; and chest presses. Plastic surgery is the only way to give your breasts a lift permanently.

#### Quick Fix

Get yourself a fitting and supportive bra. Wear a sports bra when you work out.

Thick, bluish veins that show up on some women's legs during pregnancy. Heredity, hormones, and the pressure on the veins due to pregnancy pounds play a role on the development of varicose veins.

#### Recovery Time

Three to 12 months after delivery

#### What to do if it does not get better

Elevate your leg and avoid long periods of standing or sitting to prevent varicose veins from worsening. Sclerotherapy, a procedure that requires injection of a solution to the affected leg veins to close the veins, then fade or disappear within about two weeks. It is recommended to wait at least six months after delivery to start sclerotherapy.

#### Quick Fix

Wear compression socks all day and cover the veins in pants or long skirts.

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Your genes and speed of weight gain will determine whether you get stretch marks. These thin scars could be found on the stomach, hips, breasts, or butt.

#### Recovery Time

Becomes less noticeable six to 12 months after delivery

#### What to do if it does not get better

Tretinoin cream is more effective on newer, red marks but steer clear if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. It restores collagen, a fibrous protein that helps give your skin elasticity. Radiofrequency and laser treatment can be done to treat older stretch marks.

#### Quick Fix

Embrace the marks as a part of a mummy's body - new curves, new shape and new skin.

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# Bringing Glad Tidings and Hope

Helping couples to successfully conceive is the passion of Dr Sheila Loh, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant at Raffles Fertility Centre and Raffles Women's Centre. She has over 20 years of experience as a fertility specialist and started the Raffles Fertility Centre in 2007. Dr Loh shares some interesting facts about her work and herself on a more personal level. **By Joanna Lee**



### I chose to specialise in fertility because...

I was intrigued by the mysteries of conception and the fast developing field of reproductive science back in the early 90s. The idea of In-vitro Fertilisation or test-tube babies was like a chapter out of a science fiction novel. Reproductive science has progressed so much over the years. Now cancer patients can have their eggs and embryos frozen to be used years later after they are well.

Women can have accurate tests of their egg reserves, and embryologists can inject the best and most healthy sperm into the human egg for fertilisation to take place.

### One little known fact about getting pregnant is...

It is harder than what most people think. Human conception is a miracle because it involves many biological processes that can go wrong along the way before a baby develops. The human species has been described in textbooks as one of the most infertile among all biological species because we are so complex biologically.

### A typical work day for me...

It starts with surgeries for egg retrievals and embryo transfers in the IVF operating theatre. This is followed by clinic consultations, monitoring of ovarian response by ultrasound scanning, and intrauterine insemination procedures that are performed during the rest of the day with a short lunch break in between. Gynaecological surgeries are usually scheduled in the late afternoons to evenings.

### The most rewarding part of my job is...

Whenever a couple successfully conceives a child. The journey to starting a family is often a long one with some experiencing many hurdles and disappointments along the way. When a couple bring their baby to say 'hi' after delivery, my team and I would feel even more privileged to share in their happiness.

### The most challenging part of my job is...

Helping couples stay positive even if they do not conceive despite trying their best and my best. This is often sad and disappointing for them and it is especially important for my team and me to support them both emotionally and medically. I may also have to gently offer them alternative options that they may initially not have considered, such as adoption or child-free living.

### 3 tips for couples who are trying to get pregnant...

#### a) Age

It is usually the main cause of difficulty in conceiving. Therefore, start as early as you can after marriage. A woman's eggs are at its best before 30 years of age, and a man's sperms may develop genetic abnormalities after 40 years old based on scientific research.

#### b) Prioritise a fertility-friendly lifestyle

Keep a normal BMI as people who are either overweight or underweight have lower fertility. Smoking and heavy alcohol intake will impact fertility negatively. Reduce stress and try to have intercourse at least two to three times a week to increase your chances of conception.

Men should avoid saunas and excessive heat. Women should start taking folic acid supplements. Eating healthily by including all the major food groups in their diet is a big plus.

#### c) Consult a fertility specialist

If a woman who is over 35 years old has been trying to conceive with no success for six months. Women who are below 35 years of age should do so after a year of trying if they have a regular menstrual cycle and has no other known health issues.

### The most challenging case I have come across is about...

A couple, who were in their mid thirties, each had their own infertility factors. The husband had severely low sperm count that had deteriorated over the years, and his wife had a type of polycystic ovary disease, which responded poorly to hormonal medication with either no eggs developing or too many eggs.

For the wife, the challenge was fine-tuning the right dose of medication to be given to her so that she could produce the optimum number of eggs to be fertilised. As for her husband, it was finding enough moving sperm, which took several hours to do so, to fertilise the eggs. Fortunately, the wife did produce an optimum number of eggs at one point, and had four embryos developed. Two were placed in her womb, and she later went on to deliver twins with a healthy boy and girl each weighing 3.1kg and 2.9kg at birth.

### My favourite quote, which I often tell my students, is...

"Cure sometimes, treat often, comfort always." - Hippocrates

## Personally Sheila

- The most stressful part of my childhood was having weekly piano lessons because I am partially tone deaf. However, with the help of my patient piano teacher, we both celebrated the end of my piano lessons after I passed my grade eight exam.



- If I did not become a doctor, I would have wanted to become a teacher because I love sharing my knowledge and learning from younger minds.
- My favourite past time is watching crime movies while munching on chocolates.
- I am lucky to have a husband who loves to cook because my dog once ran away from a "rock bun" that I had attempted to bake.



# Best Workouts for Mums-to-be

Pregnant? Don't toss out your fitness plans. **By Noel Lee**

Pregnant ladies, are you sitting at home and refraining from exercise as you are worried it may hurt you or your baby? According to Dr Seng Shay Way, Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant, Raffles Women's Centre, exercise can aid your pregnancy!

Some benefits of exercising during pregnancy include better mood through the release of endorphins, improved posture as you strengthen your muscles, and control of gestational diabetes. And these are just some ways exercise can aid you during your pregnancy.

Ms Nur Faradyna, Physiotherapist, Raffles Rehabilitation Centre, suggests some exercises you can do right through your pregnancy and beyond.

## Cardio



### Swimming

- Aerobic exercise strengthens your heart which improves circulation to your entire body.
- It is especially helpful for people with joint pain as it minimises injury by reducing the impact on the body.
- Swimming also strengthens the muscles around your spine and shoulders thus making it easier for you to maintain proper posture.



### Indoor cycling

- Indoor / stationary cycling is considered safer as it is on a stable platform.
- Cycling helps prevent excessive weight gain during pregnancy.
- It strengthens and tones the muscles that help you protect joints which have become more lax, and make it more manageable for your body to manage the weight gain associated with pregnancy.

## Strength Exercises



### Weight training

Weight training is generally considered safe and it helps to minimise the aches and pain from carrying a child as you are strengthening the muscles involved. Just make sure you do not use any machines or perform exercises that will put pressure against your belly.

#### Suggested exercises



#### Bicep and tricep curls

- Parents may carry heavy bags along with their baby. Therefore, train your arms will help you carry the weight with ease.



#### Leg extension and curls

- This trains your quadriceps and hamstrings so you can better bear the weight of your pregnancy.



#### Seated bench press

- The seated bench press will help train your back, chest and arms to help you gain strength to carry your baby in the future. Make sure you do not rest the bar on yourself.



#### Planking

- This trains your core and abdominal muscles for a smoother delivery. If you are in your third trimester, modify the plank so it doesn't put pressure on your belly.

## Stretching Exercises



### Yoga

Yoga, along with cardiovascular exercise, will be very beneficial during your pregnancy as it focuses on your breathing and conscious relaxation. Yoga also helps strengthen the muscles around your pelvic girdle, thus reducing your pain during delivery.

## Caution!

Make sure you are wearing loose fitting clothing, and stop exercising if you feel unwell or uncomfortable. Do check with your doctor before you start exercising.



## Conclusion

You do not have to stop exercising if you already lead an active lifestyle before getting pregnant. But do take extra precautions to make sure you do not hurt yourself or your baby. If you are just starting out, do exercises that are well within your capabilities and get advice from your gynaecologist before starting out on this endeavour.



# “ Shake off Your Pregnancy Bulge ”



By Joanna Lee

When you have a baby to care for at home, setting aside time to exercise can be challenging. Fret not, have the best of both worlds – bond with your baby and get back in shape at the same time with these six exercises that you can do at home.

Read on for exercise tips by Mr Lim Hun Teck, Chief Physiotherapist, Raffles Rehabilitation Centre.



## Before you begin:

- 1) Ensure that your baby is able to support his own neck before attempting any of these exercises with your child.
- 2) Use an exercise mat for support.



## Squats

### Benefits

- ✓ This multi-joint exercise works your back muscles, gluteus, hamstrings, and quadriceps.

Brace your abs throughout this exercise. Carry your baby in front of you. Place your feet slightly wider than your hips. Push back your butt as far as you can and bending your knees. Hold for about two seconds before returning to the starting position. Do this 15 times, two repetitions.



## Russian Twist

### Benefits

- ✓ Works the lower back and oblique muscles that help rotate your torso. A good exercise to shape the waist and fight off “love handles”.

Sit fully on your sit bone with knees bent and feet on the floor. Recline your upper body to create an imaginary V-shape\* with your thighs.

Start on either side, fully extend your arms but keep your elbows soft.

Twist your torso to the other side and lightly place your baby on the floor. Hold for two seconds before twisting back to the starting position. This is one set. Do 10 sets, two repetitions.

*\*Modify the difficulty by determining how wide the angle of your V-shape is. The bigger the angle, the more challenging it is.*





## Spider Climber

### Benefits

- ✓ Works your lower abs, obliques, quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes, chest, shoulders and triceps.

Start in a regular push-up position. Begin with your right leg, raise it up and outward, bring your knee as close to your elbow as possible so your right knee ends up a few inches outside your right elbow.

Lower your right leg back and repeat the same with the opposite leg. This counts as a set. Do 12 sets, two repetitions.

**Note:** Keep your back flat and your hands firmly on the ground to balance and support your body during the entire range of motion.



## Posterior Pelvic Tilt

### Benefits

- ✓ Works the gluteus and hamstrings, lower back, abdominal and pelvic floor muscles in a single motion.

Lie on the floor, knees bent and hip-width apart. Sit your baby on your lower abdominal while holding on to him / her. In a controlled motion, slowly lift up your hips to form a straight line with your body. Hold and squeeze your butt before returning slowly to the starting position. Do 15 times, two repetitions.



## Lunges

### Benefits

- ✓ This multi-joint exercise works on your gluteus, hamstrings, calves and quadriceps to strengthen your butt and legs; improve core strength and hip flexibility.

Stand hip-width apart, hold your baby facing outwards and close to your body. Keep your abs braced and upper body straight by pulling your shoulders back and eyes gazing forward at all times.

Step forward with one leg, lower your hips until both knees are bent at about a 90-degree angle. Make sure your front knee does not go beyond your toes, and the heel of your back leg should be lifted. Push off and return. Do this 12 times, two repetitions.

## Abdominal Crunch

### Benefits

- ✓ Works the abdominal muscles.

Lie down on a flat back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Sit your baby on your abdominal.

Brace your abs, hold onto your baby and lift your upper body towards your knees like a normal abdominal crunch. Return slowly to the starting position. Do 10 times, two repetitions.



## Ask the Experts

**Q:** Is it safe for pregnant women to fly? When during the pregnancy is it the safest and when not?

**A:** It is generally considered safe for uncomplicated healthy pregnant women to travel, regardless of the mode of transport. Most airlines allow women of single uncomplicated pregnancy of up to 36 weeks of gestation to fly. In contrast, women with complicated pregnancies (such as placental-related issues, cervical instability or risk preterm labour / miscarriage) are not advised to travel. Pregnant ladies of 36 weeks of gestation and above should avoid travelling in case of sudden changes which requires medical attention.

The safest time to travel during pregnancy is during the second trimester (18 to 24 weeks) as it carries the lowest risks of miscarriage and pre-term labour.



**Dr Raymond Choy**  
General Practitioner, Raffles Medical

**Q:** For women who are pregnant with more than one child, how much should they eat?

**A:** In general, it is recommended to add 300kcal of food for every baby. For example, a pregnant mother will require an additional 600kcal of energy if you are having twins. However, the exact number of calories needed also depends on the expectant woman's weight.



**Ms Bibi Chia**  
Principal Dietitian, Raffles  
Diabetes and Endocrine Centre

**Q:** Can I have sex during pregnancy? When do I have to stop?

**A:** It is safe to have sex during the first trimester; however, it is quite common to have bleeding during the first trimester and this can cause undue worries for the mother. Most doctors advise sexual activities only after the first trimester. However, it is best to avoid sexual activities if the expectant woman is facing complications.



**Dr Seng Shay Way**  
Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant,  
Raffles Women's Centre

**Q:** What is the best position to sleep in while I'm pregnant?

**A:** From 16 weeks pregnant, it is better to sleep on the side. When an expectant woman sleeps on her back, the weight of the pregnant uterus presses on the big blood vessels near the mother's spine and can affect the flow to both mother and baby.

Sleeping propped up with pillows can help to relieve backache and heartburn which can affect the quality of sleep in pregnancy.



**Dr Shamini Nair**  
Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology & Consultant,  
Raffles Women's Centre

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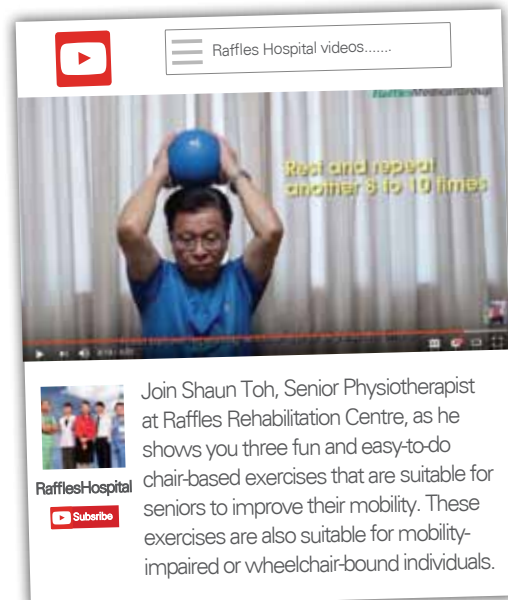
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"For me, the greatest reward is seeing patients being able to return to performing activities they value." As an Occupational Therapist, Ms Pamela Khoo has to manage up to 12 patients daily, helping them regain independence & improve their quality of life after an injury. #Recovery #OperationalTherapist #RafflesRehab



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# Start your parenthood journey with us

Our dedicated team of obstetricians and nurses will support you from conception through pregnancy and delivery, providing:

- Comprehensive range of affordable antenatal and delivery packages
- Spacious and comfortable delivery suites
- Professional post-delivery care for you and your newborn

For couples seeking help to conceive a baby, Raffles Fertility Centre offers the full spectrum of fertility treatment options. Our centre is known for its eminence in diagnosing, treating and supporting couples with fertility issues.



## Delivery Packages

### **Normal Delivery Package** (Medisave claimable \$1,650)

Private Room - \$6,000  
Twin Sharing - \$5,100  
Quad Sharing - \$4,900

### **Elective Caesarean Section Package** (Medisave claimable \$3,500)

Private Room - \$10,000  
Twin Sharing - \$8,300  
Quad Sharing - \$8,000

*Professional fees for obstetrician are included for all packages stated.*

To book an appointment, please call our  
24-Hour appointment hotline **6311 2000** or e-mail [specialist@raffleshospital.com](mailto:specialist@raffleshospital.com)



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