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The World Allergy Organization (WAO) 2016 guideline recommends prebiotic supplementation for the prevention of allergy in not exclusively breastfed infants.¹

¹World Allergy Organization, 2016

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IN this ISSUE

As 2018 wraps up and a brand new year unfolds, it is time to reflect on the moments that made the past year meaningful. No one knows that better than first-time mum Sue, whose daughter was born premature (page 8) but is today a healthy 11-month-old. With travel season upon us, learn the acupoints that can relieve common ailments (page 6) and how to prevent skin conditions that flare up in hot and humid climate (page 16). Closer to home, we recently held our TMC Quality event celebrating best practices in healthcare – part of our continual effort to ensure you enjoy the best patient care experience.

Happy holidays!

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9 in 10 mums RECOMMEND FRISO®

Important Notice: Breast milk is the best for babies. The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. Unnecessary introduction of bottle feeding or other food and drinks will have a negative impact on breastfeeding. After six months of age, infants should receive age-appropriate foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond. Consult your doctor before deciding to use infant formula as it you have difficulty breastfeeding.

*Based on a survey conducted in October 2018 with 102 mums with children between 13-36 months who are currently using Friso Gold.

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A vacation should be a happy occasion, don’t let illness or discomfort get in the way. Unexpected incidents can happen, particularly while travelling when your body is exposed to unfamiliar environment like a change in climate or even diet. Disrupted sleep, sluggish digestion, unbearable cold and motion sickness are common health issues while on the road. Here is how stimulation of acupressure points can help ease minor ailments, without having to resort to medication.

1. Fear of cold (涌泉穴)
   - This applies if you are visiting a country with a temperate climate.
   - Location of 涌泉穴: Centre of the foot, one-third from the base of the toes
   - What to do: Applying pressure on 涌泉穴 will warm up your body. It has the effect of generating yang energy that keeps you warm. Press the area repeatedly for 10-15 minutes daily

2. Insomnia (安眠穴)
   - Insomnia is common if you find it hard to sleep in a new environment or adjust your sleep pattern in a different time zone.
   - Location of 安眠穴: Two fingers-width from the back of your ear lobe
   - What to do: Gently massage the spot for 10-15 minutes half an hour before bedtime, or stick a small piece of medicated plaster for muscle soreness on your 神阙穴 30 minutes before you sleep

3. Motion sickness (神阙穴)
   - Some people suffer from such severe motion sickness that they avoid travelling altogether.
   - Location of 神阙穴: It is on your belly button
   - What to do: Stick a small piece of medicated plaster for muscle soreness on your 神阙穴 half an hour before your journey

4. Overeating (足三里)
   - It is common to overindulge when on holiday. The downside though is digestive discomfort and weight gain. By pressing this acupoint, you can get relief from problems like indigestion as your metabolic rate increases to burn off some extra calories.
   - Location of 足三里: Three inches below the centre of the knee cap, one finger-width from the outer side of the tibia
   - What to do: Press repeatedly for 10-15 minutes daily

5. Constipation (天枢穴)
   - Constipation is generally uncomfortable and is a great inconvenience while on holiday. Your tummy gets bloated and your appetite is affected.
   - Location of 天枢穴: Three fingers-width from each side of your belly button
   - What to do: Gently massage the area for 10-15 minutes when needed

Try stimulating these acupoints on your next trip and feel the difference!

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thomsonmedical.com
It was a pregnancy experience with ups and downs for first-time Thomson mum, Sue. But the unexpected turned out for the best.

It may have taken just three months for her to conceive, but Sue and her husband Albert Surdirgo faced various challenges after the happy news. "Doctors warned that there was a 10 per cent chance of miscarriage because my placenta was too low-lying," said the 33-year-old banker who hails from Riau, Sumatra. "Also, prenatal tests like the OSCAR (One-stop Clinic for Assessment of Risk for Fetal Anomalies) stressed me out. Waiting for the results was a difficult process, and so was hearing ‘horror stories’ about other cases."

Husband Albert, a 31-year-old sales professional for a tech company, recalled his wife’s pregnancy experience: "It was pretty tough at first, especially since Sue’s morning sickness – or ‘all-day sickness’, as she calls it – was really bad. But it got better once the first trimester was over."

Just when the end was near, one more unpredictable turn awaited. Their daughter, Abigail Charlotte, was scheduled to arrive on 20 February 2018 via caesarean section delivery. Instead, she was welcomed into the world a month earlier on 20 January, weighing just 2.2 kg.

Abigail was premature but Sue said the attention she received from the Thomson Medical staff went a long way to alleviate her worries. "They did such an incredible job of taking care of me," she said. "The C-section alone took just 10 minutes. I couldn’t believe it was over and done with so quickly!"

Sue expressed her gratitude for the nurses in the labour ward, adding that she was pleasantly surprised at how they constantly checked up on her when her...
water bag broke in the wee hours of the morning, and how they calmed her when she literally trembled with fear. “They were so kind and compassionate. Even after I popped, they remembered me and asked my husband how we were doing.”

After delivery, Abigail was admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), where her condition eventually stabilised and she was discharged. Sue was naturally anxious about her baby during this period, but the professionalism of the NICU nurses reassured her. “I felt better after hearing them tell me that my child wasn’t the tiniest in the NICU. There were even smaller babies but they were doing very well, so there was nothing much to worry about,” said Sue. “The nurses also updated me regularly on how Abigail was doing and what they were feeding her. My husband and I were comforted to know that Abigail was in good hands.”

From a mere 2.2kg when she was delivered, Abigail’s weight gradually increased over the months. At her last check-up in October, she was a healthy 9.05kg.

READY FOR BABY
Thomson’s team of lactation consultants was another great source of support for the Sudirgos. “Not every hospital offers this service and I found it useful as a new mum,” said Sue. “The lactation consultants taught me the proper way to express milk, and techniques like how to massage the breast before and during pumping to encourage milk flow. They also encourage parents to call them if they have any questions.”

On top of all that, the couple received a bonus: Thomson’s Breastfeeding Essentials gift set, which is presented to all mums who deliver at the hospital. It contains close to 20 different items, including a multi-way nursing scarf, calcium supplements, and even a MyJoyfulBundle insurance plan by Aviva, which covers both mother and baby for 12 months. Sue found the Hegen PCTO™ Manual Breast Pump particularly handy because it is light, portable, and easy to use. “I also found the booklets on breastfeeding very helpful. I had some trouble breastfeeding the first couple of days and was worried about how little milk I was expressing, but the manual explained that it’s normal for new mothers to express very little milk at first, so that put my mind at ease,” she added.

SLOW DOWN, EASE UP
Almost one year down the road, Sue and Albert both agree that their parenting journey has been very much like a rollercoaster ride. “There were ups and downs, and as new parents, we were uncertain and, at times, confused,” she reflected. “But now, if we could turn back time, we would have tried not to stress so much and taken it easy.”

On Abigail’s early arrival, Sue admitted she was concerned about how tiny her daughter was. “But now? Look at her. At 11-months-old, compared to some other babies her age, she’s way bigger!”

For mums-to-be out there, her advice is simple: “It’s OK to not feel OK. During pregnancy, your body will go through changes and both your body and mind will feel different. You’ll learn to deal with it. What really helps is talking to your partner, friends and family.”

THOMSON TURNS 40!
Thomson Medical has come a long way since its inception in 1979. Since then we’ve built a network of specialist medical clinics and facilities around Singapore, as well as Malaysia and Indonesia. Our aim has always been to provide personalised services for women and children, and over the years we have expanded our operations to include new areas of specialties and services.

To celebrate our 40th anniversary, we have put together a ‘Mum and Baby Bundle’. Available in 2019 to all Thomson mummies, the gift set includes 40 essential items for both mother and child, and is carefully curated to make parenthood easier. It’s our way of saying ‘thank you’ for being part of our journey!”
What is genetic carrier screening?
It is a test to detect a genetic disorder which may not exhibit symptoms.

Why is it important?
Many people are carriers of one or more recessive genetic conditions. While they do not necessarily suffer from the disease, the gene lies dormant in their body and can be inherited by their children, who may have a higher risk of being affected by the disease if both parents are carriers of the same genetic disorder. Symptoms may not be expressed until the later stages of childhood, which may delay treatment and medical attention.

How does it work?
Genetic carrier screening can test for up to hundreds of genetic conditions, including common ones like cystic fibrosis, fragile X, duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) and alpha thalassemia, with a small blood sample. Anyone can opt for carrier screening before or during pregnancy, although those with a known family history of genetic diseases may be at a higher risk of carrying the disease. The results are available in about three weeks.

What to do if you are at risk?
Some measures can be taken, especially if you plan to conceive and do not want to put your child at risk. For example, you can use a sperm or egg donor who is not a carrier of the condition, or undergo in vitro fertilisation (IVF) with preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), which screen for embryos without the genetic abnormalities before implantation to prevent pregnancies with affected babies. Prenatal genetic tests such as chorionic villi sampling and amniocentesis can also be done.

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Celebrating Life

MUM & BABY

Thomson mummy
Teh Choy Wan
shares her water birthing experience, and why she would do it again

W
ater birth is popular among women who prefer a natural childbirth without the use of epidural or medication, and who see the buoyancy of a warm water environment as a gentle way to support their birthing experience. Water birth has also been known to be less stressful on the mother and child.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE A WATER BIRTH?
Choy Wan: I read many positive stories about it online. I liked the idea of the water as a protective bubble for the mother, and that it is a calm way to bring a baby into the world as the environment of the warm water mimics the same floating sensation in the womb. I also intended to have a drug-free birth, and that goes hand-in-hand with a water birth experience.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE?
Choy Wan: It was quite intense, as I was already 10cm dilated when I reached Thomson. Twenty minutes after checking in, I went into the birthing tub. The surges were very intense, but the feeling of the water ‘protecting’ me was truly comforting. Especially the moments in between when I had to catch my breath and wait for the next surge to begin. It was beautiful to welcome my son into the world that way, and have a tribe of people supporting me along, namely my husband Michael, my doula and the wonderful Thomson nurses.

ANY WORDS OF ADVICE FOR MUMMIES CONSIDERING A WATER BIRTH?
Choy Wan: Keep an open and positive mind, free yourself from expectations and fear, and all will be well. It is a wonderful way to deliver your baby – the water really offers a degree of comfort that is unlike anything else. I would choose a water birth again if I plan to have another child. I would also advise preparing your body for the birthing process – practise breathing exercises, try ‘spinning baby’ classes, and go for chiropractic sessions to balance the body and get it healthy for childbirth. All these helped me enjoy a quick and smooth water birth.

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Our skin is sensitive to changing weather. In Singapore, average daytime temperature is around 31ºc to 32ºc with relative humidity exceeding 80 per cent. Such tropical climate can affect your skin. Here are some common conditions and how to treat them.

**SUPERFICIAL FUNGAL INFECTIONS**

Fungal infections are common in damp and humid conditions. In Singapore, athlete’s foot and jock itch are common skin infections. Athlete’s foot, or tinea pedis, is a fungal infection of the soles and toe webs of the feet, resulting in dry, scaly and itchy skin. It can eventually affect the toenails as well. Jock itch is a ringworm infection around the groin. Also common is pityriasis versicolor, which causes white, pink or brown scaly patches on the body.

**WHAT TO DO:** Keep the skinfolds and toe webs dry, especially after a shower. Use antifungal powder in your socks to reduce the risk of athlete’s foot. If you are prescribed an antifungal cream, use it for at least one to two weeks after the rash clears to minimise a recurrence. Have more than one pair of work shoes and alternate them weekly.

**ECZEMA**

Eczema is often aggravated by dry and cold conditions. Humidity may help to reduce itching and flaring, but heat and excessive perspiration can cause eczema to flare, and trigger more itching and scratching. In healthy skin, the cells in the epidermis are able to retain moisture, which forms a barrier against damage and infection. Those with eczema must be careful not to over-cleanse their skin as it can strip the protective layer of moisture, and worsen the condition. House dust mites, which thrive in hot, humid environment, can also aggravate existing eczema.

**WHAT TO DO:** Moisturising is important, even in humid weather. Use lighter formulations such as lotions, though it may be ineffective for those with very dry skin. Use gentle or soap-free cleanser and avoid long showers, which dry the skin. Many with eczema feel more comfortable in an air-conditioned environment, but maintain the room temperature at 24ºc to 25ºc, which is a comfortable range. Remember to continue using any prescribed creams and moisturisers.

**ACNE**

Heat and humidity can worsen oily, acne-prone skin. Clean your face with a gentle face wash two to three times a day. Note that certain prescribed acne medications may make skin sensitive to sunlight.

**WHAT TO DO:** Use an oil-free sunblock which will not clog pores. It also feels more comfortable on acne-prone skin. If you are on medication such as doxycycline or isotretinoin, and your face or skin turns very red, see your doctor. Topical retinoids, which clear blackheads and whiteheads, are used at night to minimise photosensitivity.

**HEAT RASH**

Heat rash (prickly heat) or miliaria is caused when skin pores become blocked and sweat cannot escape. Adults usually develop heat rash in skin folds and where clothing causes friction. In infants, the rash is mainly found on the neck, shoulders and chest. It can also appear in the axillae, elbow creases and groin, causing red bumps and occasional small clear blisters. The rash usually clears on its own.

**WHAT TO DO:** Avoid tight-fitting clothes if you are prone to heat rash. Light cotton clothing is usually recommended.

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As we celebrate our 40th Anniversary, we continue our tradition of delivering more. We have put together a bundle of 40 Mum & Baby essentials to make your parenthood journey easier. Thank you for being a part of our journey.
We all dream of having fresh, brighter skin. What better way to welcome the new year than to show off a healthier, more radiant complexion.

Medical aesthetics is a good and quick option to achieve the skin you want. The first step is to select a doctor with a reputable track record and high safety standards, especially when it comes to injectables like fillers and thread lifts, you want to be sure that the doctor can tailor a treatment plan that addresses your needs. A good doctor should be able to identify areas to both enhance and work on so that you face the world looking your best.

TREATMENTS TO CONSIDER

SKIN BOOSTERS

These are minimally-invasive treatments that smoothen skin and keep it hydrated through injections. High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU), fillers and thread lifts are some non-surgical procedures that reverse the signs of ageing by lifting and rejuvenating skin.

BOTOX

Wrinkles and lines are a common concern among many women, and rightly so, as they can make you look tired. aged, and even sad-looking. Botox injections can significantly smoothen out lines on the forehead as well as frown lines, so that you look fresher. Botox can also be used with steroids and laser treatment to minimise visible scar marks or tissues.

FACIAL CONTOURING

Through strategically placed dermal fillers, facial contouring can help shape, highlight, and contour your face. Facial contouring allows better manipulation of light and shadows and allows you to look great under any lighting and makeup, so you will radiate confidence.

While medical aesthetics can help you to achieve glowing skin, remember it is also important to take care of it. A healthy diet, eating more vegetables and fruits, drinking lots of water, regular exercise, keeping your skin clean and moisturised, and getting enough sleep, are all essential for healthy skin.

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Regain your flat tummy

There’s more to the post-pregnancy belly pooch than meets the eye.

It has been several months since you delivered your baby, you have gone on a healthy diet and stuck diligently to a regular exercise regime. You cannot wait to lose the post-partum weight, regain your pre-pregnancy body and flat tummy. Yet, while other mums seem to trim down quickly, you have not seen the same results – instead, a sausage-like mid-abdominal bulge remains, despite your best efforts. That stubborn bulge is called rectus diastasis, which, if not surgically corrected, may lead to other medical conditions.

WHAT IS RECTUS DIASTASIS?

Rectus diastasis is also known as abdominal separation, abdominal muscle gap or abdominal midline weakness. It simply means the belly sticks out because the space between the left and right stomach muscles has widened, hence the bulge or pooch. Although it can happen to anyone of any age, even men, rectus diastasis is more common among women who have given birth, face weight fluctuation, or those with genetic conditions.

WHY ARE OUR ABDOMINAL MUSCLES IMPORTANT?

The anterior abdominal muscle or rectus abdominis, is part of the core muscle, a long vertical muscle that runs down from the body’s midline. It holds our inner organs like the bladder, intestines, pelvis and uterus in place, works with our lower back to shift our weight evenly when we move, and acts like a stabiliser. Our core muscles give us balance and flexibility and allow us to move.

WHAT HAPPENS IF RECTUS DIASTASIS IS NOT TREATED?

It can cause multiple problems. Without the dynamic stabilisation of our core, weak abdominal walls can jeopardise trunk stability and mobility, compromise posture and contribute to chronic and severe back pain. It can also lead to spinal instability, pelvic floor dysfunction, urinary incontinence, bowel issues, possible hernia(s), or even affect vaginal delivery. Back and pelvic pain are the most common manifestations of rectus diastasis.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Rehabilitation exercise can help to strengthen our core muscles, but if the gap between the muscles is more than 3cm, surgery is the only option. The open method surgery involves skin removal for those with an excess fold of skin (known as abdominal apron). This will leave a visible scar on the bikini line but it will fade over time. The abdomen will be flattened and the pubis area lifted. The other surgical option is to use the minimally-invasive endoscopic method, which leaves minimal scarring but does not remove any skin. Recovery takes about two weeks, during which you are not to lift or carry heavy items. You may resume exercise after six to eight weeks.

WHAT'S NEW

Celebrating Quality and Process Excellence

Safe Practice, Safe Care® was the theme of the TMC Quality event that took place from 16-18 October 2018. Organised by the TMC Nursing and Allied Health Quality Assurance Committee, the occasion was a platform to share knowledge and best practices in infection control, electronic medical record (EMR), information technology (IT) security and current trends in quality and patient safety movement.

Numerous talks were conducted by various professionals and healthcare experts. Topics were diverse, ranging from overcoming pitfalls in EMR by Senior Associate of Dentos Rodyk & Davidson LLP Mr Chia Hau Yuan; challenges faced by nurses due to greater use of IT by Assistant Director of Nursing Ms Linda Lau; and the individual’s role and responsibility involving patient data by Senior Project Manager of Management Information Mr Seah Poh Chuan. In addition, there were talks by NUS Professor Paul Ananthanarayam Tambyah, who is also a visiting consultant at SAF & NTFGH, and National Kidney Foundation’s Infection Control Manager Ms Jamilah Jantan.

The year 2018 also marked the launch of a new initiative – the appointment of The Quality Champion (TQC) – which aims to promote TMC’s mission of quality care at the microsystem level. The appointed Quality Champion, a role which runs for a year, was voted and selected by peers and supervisors based on qualities such as leadership, team spirit, innovativeness, demonstration of safe practices and commitment to excellence. The Quality Champion will play a pivotal role in their work area and across the organisation, build awareness of quality patient care, serve as a role model and advocate continuous improvement.

TMC’s Quality event also rewarded teams who engaged in quality improvement work by redesigning care processes to bring greater value to patients. Congratulations to Delivery Suite, Ward 4 and Ward 5 teams for winning the top three spots, with NICU clinching the “Most Innovative Award”!
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