celebrating Life

THE TRUTH ABOUT GESTATIONAL DIABETES
How this disease can impact your pregnancy

HEALTH BOOSTERS
Strengthen your child's immune system with TCM

THRIVING WITH THREE
Thomson mummy QiuQiu opens up about life with three kids
DO YOU KNOW THAT C-SECTION & NORMAL DELIVERY BORN CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT?

C-SECTION DELIVERY

• Higher levels of potentially bad bacteria¹
• Lower levels of good bacteria¹

NORMAL DELIVERY

• Higher levels of good bacteria²,³

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PROBIOTICS BBM-16V

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² Roger LC et al, Microbiology, 2010, 156(11):3329-41
^ scGOS/fCOS(9:1)
IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to the latest edition of Celebrating Life! In this issue, we catch up with social media influencer Bong QiuQiu to find out how life has changed for her since she welcomed her third child (page 14). Mothers-to-be can also learn more about gestational diabetes and its effects on pregnancy (page 10). As parents, we want to keep our children safe and healthy, so find out how paediatric TCM can boost your child’s immunity (page 4). Also, pick up tips on keeping them healthy through the year-end examinations (page 18). Finally, we recommend fun places and activities where families can spend quality time together without breaking the bank (page 22). Happy reading!

The Editorial Team
HEALTH BOOSTERS

Find out how TCM can strengthen children's immune systems.

Many parents would be well acquainted with the likes of antibiotics, cough syrups, fever and cold medicine. However, for children who frequently require medication for coughs, allergies and digestive ailments, there is always the fear that they might overdose their kids.

Children are now starting pre-school education at an earlier age, before their immune systems have fully developed. Placed in new environments with potential sources of infectious bacteria they have yet to be exposed to could result in children falling sick more often. Their weak immune systems may also cause periods of prolonged illness.
So, some parents hunt for safe, natural remedies that are effective for children. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is one such alternative that has been growing in popularity with younger parents. Aside from providing herbal medication and other non-invasive treatments, TCM also boosts children’s immune systems and encourages overall wellness.

Healthy energy, or ‘Qi’ as it is known in TCM, refers to the body’s natural resistance against diseases or the body’s vital functions. TCM views children’s body constitutions as delicate as their organs are still developing, which renders them vulnerable to falling sick. Although they are susceptible to contracting and transmitting diseases, children recover rapidly and respond well to TCM treatments because of their dynamic physiology. Following a consultation using TCM techniques such as observing, hearing and smelling, physicians can tailor a treatment plan that works best for the child’s condition. Apart from TCM massage, or Xiao Er Tui Na, Chinese herbal medicine may be prescribed and dietary changes recommended.

TCM massage for children (Xiao Er Tui Na)

TCM massage for children, also known as Xiao Er Tui Na, aims to promote health and well-being without the need for medication. It is an ancient technique which involves stimulating unique acu-points to regulate energy flow within the meridians to improve natural organ functions.

Effects of Xiao Er Tui Na

1. Enhances bodily functions
Clinical research has proven that the TCM acu-points and meridian lines can balance ‘Qi’ and ‘Blood’ (气血) circulation in the human body. Such acu-points and meridians also play a vital role in regulating the ‘Ying’ and ‘Yang’ (阴阳) elements in our body. Massaging these acu-points along the corresponding meridian lines can enhance children’s immunity systems, as well as regulate the body as a whole to bring about overall wellness.

2. Mitigates pain and alleviates discomfort
Xiao Er Tui Na can ease any pain and discomfort the child is experiencing. This is done through using massage techniques that target relevant related organs, i.e. the lungs, kidney, liver, heart and spleen, for therapeutic effects on the child. Its healing benefits apply to a wide range of illnesses including flu, asthma, constipation and colic.

3. Boosts physical resistance against illnesses
Xiao Er Tui Na builds up children’s resistance against diseases. Through the therapeutic actions on the acu-points along the meridians, the child’s ‘Qi’ and ‘Blood’ flow are regulated to optimal levels. This balance is vital to achieving overall wellness – it also has the effect of preventing the illnesses from worsening.
**Xiao Er Tui Na at home**
Parents are encouraged to give their child a TCM massage at home. In a simple Xiao Er Tui Na technique (shown in the picture below), the child lies face down, while you use your fingertips to massage along the baby’s spine, working from the lower tailbone up to the neck area.

In addition to Xiao Er Tui Na, TCM also prescribes Chinese medicine to strengthen children’s immune system. These medicines are very mild, and suitable for children – common ingredients in TCM herbal soups include huang qi (黄芪), dang shen (党参), bai shu (白术), fu lin (茯苓) and huang jing (黄精).

TCM Xiao Er Tui Na treatment is suitable for children from six months to six years. Oral Chinese medication is prescribed to children aged two years and above. Thomson Medical TCM physicians can provide an external herbal pack for children who do not like the taste of herbal medication.

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**4 SIMPLE WAYS to boost children’s immunity**

1. **Take it warm**
   Do not drink and eat cold food or beverages.

2. **Have a balanced diet**
   Children who are picky eaters may lack nutrients which are essential to the body’s growth and development.

3. **Rest**
   Have ample rest.

4. **Be active**
   Participate in moderate outdoor activities.
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What is gestational diabetes?
Gestational diabetes is the development of diabetes during pregnancy. Diabetes occurs when the body is unable to produce enough insulin to regulate blood glucose, resulting in high blood sugar levels. Similarly, gestational diabetes develops when the body does not provide enough insulin to handle the increase in glucose produced during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes usually develops during the middle or end of pregnancy. Therefore, the test to diagnose gestational diabetes, which is known as the Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT), is conducted at between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy. It is a simple blood test that is taken about 60 minutes after the mother has consumed a sugar load (a drink with high sugar content).

What are the warning signs of gestational diabetes?
Most women with gestational diabetes do not experience any symptoms. Thus it is highly recommended that they undergo OGTT even though there are no symptoms of the disease.

However, if sugar levels are very high, some symptoms include:
• Being unusually thirsty all the time.
• Frequent urination.
• Feeling tired or nauseous (which can be similar to early pregnancy symptoms).
• Sugar detected in urine tests (conducted during each prenatal visit with the gynaecologist).
What factors will increase the risk of gestational diabetes?

An unhealthy diet can increase the risk of gestational diabetes. Excess intake of foods that are high in sugar or carbohydrates also increases risks.

Other risk factors include:
- A family member (parent or sibling) who has diabetes.
- A high Body Mass Index (BMI) of over 30kg/m².
- Had gestational diabetes in previous pregnancies.
- Had a baby weighing over 4kg in previous pregnancies.
- A history of polycystic ovarian syndrome.
- Aged 40 years or older.
- Family origin with a high prevalence of diabetes (South Asian, Chinese, Middle-Eastern, or African-Caribbean).

Asians have a higher chance of developing gestational diabetes. Which is why it’s recommended that all women in Singapore test for gestational diabetes at 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy. Mothers-to-be with any risk factors will have an additional test earlier in the first trimester, and again at 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy if the initial test result was normal.

How does gestational diabetes affect a pregnancy?

With proper diagnosis and treatment, most women with gestational diabetes can have healthy pregnancies and babies. However, poorly controlled gestational diabetes can result in complications that affect both mother and baby.

Risks for the baby:
- High birth weight.
- Early birth.
- Low blood sugar.
- Breathing difficulties after birth.
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin).
- Obesity or Type 2 diabetes later in life.

Risks for the mother:
- Induced labour and Caesarean section.
- Wound infections after delivery.
- High blood pressure (preeclampsia).
- Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia).
- Gestational diabetes in future pregnancies.
- Type 2 diabetes later in life.

How is gestational diabetes treated?

Adopting a healthy diet and exercising regularly are crucial to managing gestational diabetes. Women with gestational diabetes will also have to monitor their blood glucose levels at home using a glucometer. Some patients may require additional medication, such as oral tablets and insulin injections, for the rest of the pregnancy.

Are there any long-term effects of gestational diabetes?

Most women who have gestational diabetes will return to normal after delivery. However, they do have a higher risk of developing diabetes during future pregnancies and later in life. All women with gestational diabetes are required to undergo an OGTT at least six weeks after delivery, to ensure that their blood glucose levels are back to normal.

It is essential to test for diabetes or pre-diabetes every one to three years.

Can women lower the risk of developing gestational diabetes?

A healthy lifestyle, proper diet, and regular exercise is key to preventing gestational diabetes.

- Maintain a balanced diet rich in whole grains, complex carbohydrates, lean meats and plenty of fruits and vegetables. Cut down on sugary drinks, snacks and desserts.
- Mothers-to-be should have an exercise regimen. Safe and easy workouts include spinning and swimming.
- Before getting pregnant, women should aim to be of a healthy weight or BMI of less than 30kg/m² as obesity increases the risk of gestational diabetes.
- During pregnancy, target a healthy total weight gain of 11kg to 16kg over the nine months. Excessive weight gain can also increase risks.
Have a “pimple” that never seems to heal? Resist the urge to pop it because it could be a benign cyst.

What is a cyst?
A cyst is a dome-shaped lesion that contains fluid or semi-fluid material within a closed pocket of tissue. It can feel firm or fluctuant (unstable) and often distends the overlying skin, which appears as a lump. Cysts are a common occurrence and are mostly benign (non-cancerous).

How are cysts treated?
Asymptomatic cysts do not require treatment. However, patients often opt to remove cysts if they are increasing in size or become infected and inflamed. A course of antibiotics may be needed if the cyst is inflamed.

In some cases, cysts are treated by making an incision and draining its contents. However, cysts may recur after this type of treatment. The most common and effective way to remove a cyst is by cutting out the lesion entirely. It is a surgical procedure that is done under local anaesthesia, and patients receive stitches to close the incision after removal of the cyst. A specimen of the cyst can be sent for biopsy to confirm that it is benign. Patients may be able to claim the surgical expenses of this procedure from MediSave or insurance.

Many patients seek dermatological treatment after discovering a bump or lump that may fluctuate in size. Sometimes, it comes to their attention because the area is inflamed or tender. This growth can be the result of a cyst developing in the skin.

What do cysts look like?
Epidermoid cysts are the most common type of cysts. Usually found underneath the skin, they look like round, firm nodules that are flesh-coloured or yellowish in appearance. There may also be a central pore or punctum (a small distinct point) present. These cysts contain keratin, a soft, cheese-like material with a distinct odour.

Pilar cysts are common dermal cysts that typically form on the scalp. This type of cyst feels firm or hard to the touch, and there is usually no punctum seen. Pilar cysts occur mostly in middle-aged adults.

There are many different types of cysts, and these can vary in appearance depending on their type and location. Cysts can form anywhere on the body – common sites include the face, scalp, upper arms and back. Cysts can also develop in the genital region.
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Needed for the formation of red blood cells and the normal functioning of nervous system.

Folic Acid
Plays a role in the formation of red blood cells and helps support foetus’ growth and overall development.

Iodine
Essential for the synthesis of thyroid hormones by the thyroid gland, and contributes to normal cognitive function.

References:

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For Mum For Your Little One
THRIVING WITH THREE

Thomson mummy QiuQiu opens up about her life with three kids.
There is never a dull moment when you are raising three young kids. Just ask social media personality Ang Chiew Ting, or QiuQiu as she is affectionately known, the proud mother of a preschooler, toddler and newborn. The family’s newest member, baby boy Oliver, whom she delivered in April, joins elder sisters Meredith and Amelia as Thomson babies.

A smooth pregnancy

“My pregnancy with Oliver flew by because I spent it mostly chasing my two girls around. I don’t even recall having any morning sickness,” QiuQiu notes. Thankfully, all was smooth-sailing this time especially since she had a complicated pregnancy with her middle child, Amelia. “What I enjoy the most about pregnancy is staying at Thomson Medical,” she laughs. “The staff makes the experience truly special. As it was my third time in the delivery suite, I recognised several of the nurses. They took good care of me, and that sense of familiarity was very comforting.”

QiuQiu’s affinity for Thomson Medical extends beyond pregnancy and postnatal needs. For Meredith, Amelia and now Oliver, her trusted paediatrician is Dr Eugene Han of Thomson Paediatric Centre. “Dr Han is very meticulous and patient. Besides caring for my children’s health, he takes the time to reassure me if I have any concerns.” QiuQiu opens up about her initial worries over Amelia’s developmental milestones. “I kept comparing Amelia’s developmental pattern to Meredith’s, but it turns out that I had nothing to worry about because every child develops at their own pace.”
Learning as a family
“Right now it feels like I am living in the military,” QiuQiu jokes when asked about how she is adjusting to life with three kids. “We run on a tight (and packed) schedule, and I am a lot more organised.” Of course, life is easier as her daughters cooperate with each other. QiuQiu states fondly, “The girls love Oliver a lot. They take the initiative to watch out for him and help out whenever they can.”

QiuQiu’s parenting style – which has evolved with the addition of each child – is clearly paying off. She has four golden rules: Always set a good example; have open conversations with the children; listen and understand their feelings; and practise self-reflection. QiuQiu explains, “We have become parents, but that does not mean we are perfect or always right. If I realise I was too harsh on the girls, I make sure that I address the incident and apologise.” She recounts times where Meredith would emulate her approach, “She even asks leading questions such as ‘Do you think this is right or wrong?’ and ‘What do you feel about this?’ to help Amelia think through her mistakes.”

Likewise, QiuQiu has learned plenty from her little ones. “With Meredith, I learned how to be more forgiving and sensitive to other people’s feelings.” She continues, “Amelia has taught me to be more accepting. With her, I learned how to take things slow.” And while QiuQiu’s journey with Oliver has only just begun, she is excited about the precious experiences to come. “He is my first boy, so I wonder if raising him will be very different from what I imagine it to be!”

Working it out
Going from two children to three and juggling a busy career is no easy feat. So how does QiuQiu manage it? “My number one tip is to allow yourself to breathe. Give yourself mini-breaks through the day, even if you only have five minutes to unwind.” QiuQiu, who enjoys listening to audiobooks after tucking in her kids at night, emphasises the importance of these little pockets of “me-time”. She continues, “Make time for your social life, catch up with friends and family and do activities that you enjoyed before becoming a mother. These short breaks will help to ease frustrations – let it go as you go!”
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With the exam season coming up, this is not a good time for students to fall ill. As children hunker down to revise for their papers, it will not be surprising if they fail to observe healthy lifestyle principles. Therefore, parents play a vital role in providing the support children need to tackle this crucial period leading up to the examinations. We share seven ways parents can help their child stay healthy.
1 Help junior develop a revision plan
• Guide your child in organising his revision routine and timetable instead of planning a study schedule on his behalf.
• Ensure that he allocates one hour-long sessions to revise each subject.
• Have him set aside about 20 minutes for a short break after every hour of revision. His schedule should also include time for meals.
• Remind your child not to schedule a last-minute study session on the morning of the exam. Doing so may unnecessarily increase anxiety and stress, especially since he will need to be calm and alert for the examination.

2 Keep the study environment conducive
• Ensure that your child is studying in a bright and airy space. Dim, stuffy rooms with no air circulation can cause headaches.
• Cluttered workspaces can also cause unnecessary stress. Remind your child to keep his study materials neatly organised.
• Prepare a bottle of water for junior. Since the brain is made up of 70 per cent water, it is vital to stay hydrated.
• Listening to soft classical music may help your child focus better while studying.

3 Take small meals and healthy snacks
• Ensure that your child eats smaller meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner when he is revising, then supplement his diet with healthy snacks. Heavy meals will leave him feeling bloated and sluggish.
• Healthy snacks like blueberries, pumpkin seeds and other nuts will not just satisfy hunger, but also boost brain juices!

4 Teach stress management strategies
• Meditating or doing deep breathing exercises while squeezing a stress ball can keep revision stress in check.
• If your child has a paper the following day, let him take a breather, especially if he has been putting in many hours of revision.

5 Defuse his stress
• Take your child’s mind off the exams – talk to him about the news or what plans he has after the exams.
• Junior knows how important the exams are, so do not harp on it as this will only add unnecessary stress!
• Do not compare your child’s past exam performance to his peers or remind him about it.

6 Get a good night of sleep
• Burning the midnight oil will do more harm than good as this increases the body’s production of cortisol, a stress hormone.
• So, make your child set a “stop work” time in the evening, to give him ample time to relax before hitting the sack.
• Encourage your child to get seven to nine hours of sleep nightly.

7 Make time to exercise
• Encourage junior to take short walks or do light stretches instead of exercising vigorously as this might cause injury. #
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- Complements the Shnuggle Bath Tub.
- Raises the Shnuggle Bath to waist height, ensuring a safer bath for baby.
- Lightweight and folds for easy storage.
- Recommended for 0 to 6 months.
- Dimensions: 52cm x 52cm x 86cm.

**Little Palmerhaus Mason Wash Mittens (Set of 2 pairs), $13.80**
- Clean baby easily and gently.
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BUDGET ADVENTURES

Check out four family-friendly places to spend the weekend without breaking the bank.

Far East Organisation Children’s Garden
Fun and adventure await at this state-of-the-art playscape, which has various interactive zones and water-play features suitable for all ages. Little ones will have a great time at the Toddler Play Zone, which features sensory play equipment like a sway bridge, water tunnels and fish sculptures. Older kids can explore the two Rainforest Tree Houses – built among a dense canopy of trees and accessible through a 130m-long forest trail – to their hearts’ content. For even more family fun, head to the sheltered amphitheatre for musical and educational performances.
Address: Bay South, Gardens by the Bay, 8 Marina Gardens Drive

Coney Island Park
Up for a fun-filled day outdoors? Pack a picnic and head to Coney Island Park. As you explore – you can walk, skate or cycle there – watch out for features unique to the ecologically sustainable park. Try spotting the 80 species of birds located in the forest and mangrove habitats, and give the Casuarina Explorer obstacle course a go. Finally, take a stroll down the beach and marvel at Mother Nature in her full glory.
Address: Beside Punggol Promenade Nature Walk

Fire Station Tour
Grab your little firefighter wannabe for a morning visit to the fire station. Held every Saturday from 9am to 11am, these tours offer visitors a glimpse at the life of a firefighter. Children can try what they do daily, from using a fire hose and boarding emergency vehicles, to even sliding down the fireman’s pole. Check out the Singapore Civil Defence Force website for more information.

The Art Ground
The Artground: A Curious Place To Be is a play space for children aged 12 and below. It offers an array of multisensory experiences through interactive art installations that children can explore, allowing them to practise their motor skills. On weekends, families with young children can take part in arts-related programmes ranging from performing arts to art-and-craft activities.
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