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the Season of
Hope



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The image of strawberry is for illustration purposes only. Product does not contain real strawberries.

Reference: 1. Huynh DTT, et al. J Matern Fetal Neonatal Med. 2017. DOI: 10.1080/14767058.2017.1320984.

†As of Nov 2017 for all maternal milk in Singapore.

*Comparison among all maternal milk in Singapore as of Nov 2017, as declared on the label. Most complete in terms of the total number of vitamins and minerals.

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CEO's Message

How time flies! Before we know it, this is already the last issue of My Alvernia for 2018. It's also the time that we share some of our key developments as well as reflect on the meaning of the season that's just around the corner.

With the strength of our achievements at the hospital and our rich nursing legacy spanning 57 years, we will always be embracing our Franciscan values and mission in reaching out to the marginalised, vulnerable and under-served. We demonstrate our respect for these people's wellbeing with our heavily subsidised medical and dental services through our Outreach programmes.

Hoping to bring healthcare closer to home-bound seniors who otherwise might not be able to access such services regularly, we visited some seniors in their homes with medical students from Duke-NUS Medical School. These visits provide medication awareness and education along with practical advice on healthy diet and exercising.

We also created several new programmes in response to healthcare needs in under-served communities in 2018. Two examples are the Dental Care for Domestic Helpers initiative launched in April and the Dental Screening Programme in May. For the first, domestic helpers were referred to our dental clinic for subsidised dental care while the latter, in partnership with the Singapore Dental Health Foundation, targeted vulnerable families and seniors staying in public rental flats around Toa Payoh East.

Our on-campus specialists also play a significant role in our outreach efforts. Read on to find out how Dr Timothy Lee, a neurosurgeon, gave hope to a 6-year-old girl and her mother.

We are happy to share that our new Endoscopy Centre was opened on 1 October. Redesigned as a one-stop facility, it has been relocated to Level 3 in Medical Centre B, next to the Day Surgery Ward. It is equipped with a central monitoring system that allows monitoring of the patients' vital signs from the nursing station, regardless of whether the patient is in the operating theatre, recovery bay or the wards. This advanced feature will further enhance safety and comfort of the patients' experience.

On a lighter note, we are honoured to share that we recently emerged as the SG Parents Choice Winner for Maternity Hospital. Organised by Young Parents magazine with a readership of 32,000, we were voted the choice maternity hospital by their readers. This is indeed a testament to the hard work and teamwork put in by all our staff.

Reflecting on the year that's coming to an end, my hope for the hospital is for us to continue serving all with love and be a beacon of hope for our stakeholders – patients and their families, and the people served by our Outreach team. Quoting Mother Teresa, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." We can achieve a lot more working as a team, and we hope to continue working closely with like-minded partners and expand our networks to serve more with love.

On that note, I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2019 ahead!



Dr James Lam Kian Ming
CEO
Mount Alvernia Hospital

Wishing You a Blessed Christmas



*"O come let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout
joyfully to the rock of our salvation." - Psalm 95:1*



Letter to Dr Simon Ng, Paediatrician/Neonatologist, Kids Clinic, Mount Alvernia Hospital

Should parents co-sleep with their baby? Are there any benefits of co-sleeping with my baby? What is a suitable age to start co-sleeping with my baby and when should I stop?

Co-sleeping with baby is taken to mean that baby sleeps with the mother/caregiver in the same bed. This is not encouraged in the first year of life. There have been instances whereby tired mothers have fallen asleep and lain over the baby and even suffocated the baby.

As an adult bed is not usually equipped with barriers at the edge, a baby can roll off the bed and fall to the floor. Furthermore, some adult mattresses are too soft. The baby's nose can be buried in a soft mattress and the baby can be suffocated should they roll over.

I encourage mothers and caregivers to sleep in separate beds. The baby cot should be near to the mother to allow the mother to reach out and handle as well as feed and observe the baby. The baby cot should have barriers at the edge to prevent the baby from rolling off the bed.

The mattress should be firm and not too soft to prevent the nose being buried and suffocated by a soft mattress should the baby roll over to a prone position. The baby cot should not have any soft pillows for the same reason.

Letter to Dr Mark Tang, Consultant Dermatologist, The Skin Specialists and Laser Clinic, Mount Alvernia Hospital

There are rashes on my hand that won't go away and I am told it is eczema. I have tried creams but they bring no relief. What should I do?

It must be so frustrating for you to have these recurrent rashes on your hands. While hand eczema is the commonest cause for relapsing itchy and red rashes on the hands, I would suggest that you consult a skin specialist, especially if the rashes are worsening or not responding well to the medicated creams.

Rashes are usually caused by skin inflammation, which can have many causes including eczema. Eczema is a very common skin condition, and many individuals with hand eczema may also have underlying atopic eczema, which is a 'genetic' form of 'sensitive' skin. Eczema can occur in adults or children and is not contagious.

One of the key challenges in controlling hand eczema is that many daily activities at home or at work may cause or worsen the condition. For example, regular hand washing, housework, preparing meals, cleaning the kids and nail cosmetics can expose our hands to irritating chemicals that can cause contact eczema of the hands. Stress can also worsen hand eczema, too!

Hence, one of the most important steps in managing this chronic problem is good skin care to repair and protect the skin barrier. It's important to eliminate all forms of contact with irritant chemicals such as soaps, detergents and hand sanitizers. Switch to soap-free cleansers, even for bathing and routine washing of your hands. Use hand protection, such as gloves, if you need to do any wet work at home or at work. Moisturise your hands as frequently as possible with a good moisturiser. Consider patch testing to identify 'hidden' allergens such as nickel or fragrance allergy. Check that the creams that you are using are appropriate and effective for the degree of inflammation of your rashes, otherwise they may not work. Finally, once the rashes are better, it's crucial to stick to this skin care regime to prevent the eczema from coming back again.

Letter to Dr Anthony Goh, Dentist, Mt A Dental Centre

What medical conditions can be complicated by poor dental health?

Conditions such as diabetes, heart surgery, hip and knee replacement surgery, chemotherapy or radiation therapy, long-term hormone therapy, and even some bone-strengthening medications may be complicated by poor dental health.

In some situations, such as with a particular type of heart infection, poor dental health may cause a severe illness that could lead to a stroke. Patients have also been admitted to the hospital for a long-standing fever that turned out to be caused by dental abscess. This could have been prevented with regular dental check-ups.

You Ask

Q: Are rooms 327 and 328 available for delivery? I also noticed epidural is available for a C-section. Is spinal block available as well?

A: All our rooms are subject to availability and can only be confirmed at the time of admission. Due to urgent and emergent admission for maternity patients, we are unable to predict the availability of any room in our hospital.

Epidural and spinal block refers to the same procedure, which is available. Kindly also check with your doctor on this procedure. Should you require further assistance, please feel free to contact us.

Q: Is it possible to add in an EBV IgA or IgM blood test into any of the health screening packages?

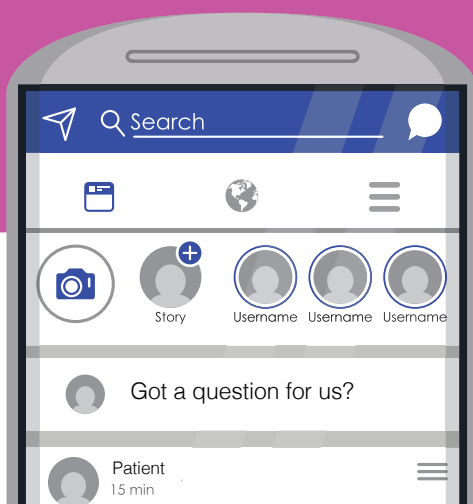
A: Thank you for your interest in our Health Screening Packages. You can add on other blood tests to your health screening package.

Q: Am I able to use Medisave for payment at the outpatient clinic?

A: There are no e-filing facilities for outpatient bills. Hence, Medisave cannot be used.

Q: My mother, who is a foreign passport-holder, has recently experienced uneven breathing and coughing and wants to have a CT scan of the lungs. What is the procedure and approximate cost, and can I use my Medisave for my mother? I am a Singapore citizen.

A: A doctor's referral letter is required for a CT scan. You may visit our 24-hour Outpatient Clinic to consult a doctor first, or alternatively consult a GP to get a referral letter for the scan. The cost of a CT scan of the lungs is \$416. With contrast, there's an additional charge of \$92. Charges exclude GST. You will not be able to use Medisave for this scan. To book a CT scan appointment, please contact our Diagnostic Imaging Department at 6347 6200.



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Short Takes

Come, Sing a Song of Joy!
Season's Eatings

Come, Sing a Song of Joy!



The Mount Alvernia Hospital Choir have been practising in earnest for Christmas. Led by a staff member who sings in the chorus of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the line-up includes many staff members who have been singing together since 2009, when the choir was first formed.

The 40 or so members gather every Friday for choir practice, in preparation for their performance at the Christmas Light-up organised by Assisi Hospice on 30 November 2018. They will also go carolling in the hospital wards during the week before Christmas, bringing good cheer to patients who, for a moment, can forget whatever ails them as they are enthralled by the beauty of angelic voices joined together in song.

- Season's Eatings -

Every year, the patients of Mount Alvernia Hospital get to enjoy an authentic taste of Christmas, thanks to the hospital's special festive menus. Turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding, honey baked ham and other festive dishes are among the treats in store for all those permitted to indulge. Naturally, good taste is always carefully balanced with nutritional value.

Feast your eyes on these dishes from our festive menus.



Christmas Day Lunch Menu



Christmas Eve Dinner Menu



Christmas Eve Dinner Menu



Christmas Day Lunch Menu

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Short Takes

Reclaiming the
Meaning of Christmas
from the Grinch

Reclaiming the Meaning of Christmas from the Grinch

More than a storybook character, the grumpy green loner in Dr Seuss's iconic tale inspires a generous dollop of Christmas kindness.

AN AVERSION TO HAPPINESS

The Grinch is a bitter and grouchy creature with a heart "two sizes too small" who lives alone on snowy Mount Crumpit, just north of Whoville, home of the merry and warm-hearted Whos. His only companion is Max the dog, whom he enlists as his partner in crime. 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas' is quite a departure from the usual feel-good festive stories, and yet it remains a favourite holiday read for all ages.

FEELING ALONE VS BEING ALONE

The Grinch's aversion to happiness can be largely explained by the findings of the late Dr John Cacioppo, a pioneer in the field of social neuroscience who studied the effects of loneliness on the human brain.

In his studies, he was careful to make the distinction between being alone and being lonely. Loneliness is not the voluntary 'alone time' of socially connected people who strive to balance the noise of city life. Rather, it is the feeling of social isolation that can be experienced even among a crowd of people – or despite the presence of hundreds of 'friends' on Facebook.

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), Dr Cacioppo observed that lonely people responded more strongly to images of human conflict than to images of human happiness. It also showed that lonely people seem to 'resist' happiness and their response to the things that make other people happy has become

dulled over time. And so it seems that lonely people are drawn to unhappiness. The Grinch certainly was, so much so that he devises and executes a plot to upset Christmas for everyone by stealing the decorations, the gifts and the goodies.

SPREADING CHRISTMAS KINDNESS

While the Grinch's "small heart grew three sizes" in a single day in the book, in the real world it typically takes years of therapy to help those suffering from loneliness. All over the world, and especially at Christmas, philanthropic organisations are making efforts to befriend the lonely and marginalised members of society – they could be elderly, bereaved, mentally unwell, housebound or simply new to town. We are not talking about names on cards or fleeting faces on social media, but honest attempts at forging meaningful human connections.

If you have a 'Grinch' or 'Scrooge' in your neighbourhood, why not reach out and show a little Christmas kindness?

We leave you with these words from the late great Dr Seuss and his grumpy alter-ego, the Grinch: "Maybe Christmas, he thought... doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps... means a little bit more!" 🎅

Sources:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviddisalvo/2011/12/22/neuroscience-explains-why-the-grinch-stole-christmas/#5979fc6a6d51>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-science-success/201010/the-cure-loneliness>



Stress Can Be a Good Thing

Contrary to what you might think, having a little stress can get you moving in the right direction.

GOOD STRESS BOOSTS PRODUCTIVITY

When you encounter a stress trigger, good or bad, your heart pounds, your blood pressure spikes, you might break out in a sweat or feel butterflies in your tummy. One thing's for sure – you know you're alive!

Good stress is vital for a healthy balance in life. Also called euphoric stress or eustress, good stress keeps us on our toes and motivates us to reach for our goals. It often accompanies good news, such as landing a job or receiving a marriage proposal. At school and at work, it can provide a boost of positive energy that helps us complete deadline-driven tasks on time, stay ahead of the competition and fulfil our potential.

THANK GOODNESS FOR FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT MOMENTS

Aside from euphoric stress, there are times when we truly need a surge of those powerful fight-or-flight hormones our bodies produce in acutely stressful situations. Imagine an out-of-control car is hurtling towards you, or a sudden crisis requires an immediate decision at work. When the brain perceives physical or psychological stress, it starts pumping chemicals into the body. Instantly, the heart beats faster, blood pressure increases, senses sharpen, a rise in blood glucose invigorates us – and you leap away from that runaway car or make that deal-clinching decision in the nick of time.

When acute stress triggers a survival mechanism that can literally save a life or save the day, that's obviously a good thing.

TURN YOUR STRESS AROUND

Your body's response to good stress is combined with the sum of all its responses to bad, acute and chronic stress. Regardless of the source, it's all the same in the end – stress overload. Your body gets worn out, and risks becoming exhausted to the point of exhaustion.

For the sake of both our health and happiness, it is important that we learn to control stress, rather than let it control us. A special study from Harvard Medical School suggests that we can consciously retrain our minds to deal with stress in a positive way.

Take a pounding heart. Instead of stressing about the heart attack you're fearing will happen, tell yourself that it's making you stronger. The stress response will then be modified and experienced as a challenge response. Instead of constricting blood vessels and ramping up inflammation in anticipation of wounds, the cardiovascular system pumps more blood to the brain, much like it does during exercise. Rather than bringing on a panic attack or even a heart attack, it can actually help you perform under pressure.

In short, stress does not have to be your enemy. Don't fight it – embrace it and manage it. And whatever you do, don't stress out about being stressed. ■

Sources:
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-kind-of-stress-is-good-for-you-3145055>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/harnessing-the-upside-of-stress>

Season's Readings

It has often been said that a book is a gift that keeps on giving. Times recommends some timely gift ideas and great holiday reads for the little ones in your life.



THE GRINCH, THE STORY OF THE MOVIE

Fun Factor With hilarious characters and a laugh-out-loud funny plot, this new release is the perfect companion to the upcoming Christmas movie at the cinema.

Life Lesson When touched by the kindness of sweet little Cindy Lou and the spirit of Christmas, even the grumpy old Grinch can show a little kindness. There's no such thing as a hopeless case!



See the movie, read the book – or vice versa!

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON, SERIES, BY CRESSIDA COWELL

Fun Factor Dragons, Vikings, an unlikely hero called Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third – need we say more?

Life Lessons There are too many to list here, but for starters, let's go with – never under-estimate the underdogs, practice makes perfect, and the importance of being yourself.



The books that inspired the animated DreamWorks movies

SWIMMY BY LEO LIONNI

Fun Factor We are plunged into the wonders and perils of the underwater world as we follow the adventures of a plucky little fish (and a rugged individual) called Swimmy. Charming illustrations and enthralling sea creatures keep kids glued to the pages.

Life Lesson Swimmy teaches his timid fish friends that they can all enjoy a better life when they work together. A simple, touching tribute to the power of teamwork!



First published in 1963, and an award-winning Caldecott Honor book

THE WONDERFUL THINGS YOU WILL BE BY EMILY WINFIELD MARTIN

Fun Factor Rollicking rhythmic rhymes and witty illustrations make this extended poem a pleasure for parents to read and a delight for children to hear and see.

Life Lesson The world is your oyster. Hang onto your dreams and life can take you anywhere you want it to!



Ideal gift for baby showers, birthdays and graduations

THE GIVING TREE BY SHEL SILVERSTEIN

Fun Factor A talking tree, a boy (who turns into a man and then an old man) who talks to a tree. A cautionary note: though there are moments of joy, there are moments of sadness and many bittersweet truths in the pages of this book.

Life Lesson At the end of the story, the old man regrets not spending more time with the ever loving, endlessly giving tree. Note to self: spend more time with the ones you love.



A children's classic first published in 1964

Start a Tradition of Loving Literature

Beloved children's classics and personal favourites are revisited time and again throughout the growing years. And when the child becomes a parent, they often experience the nostalgic joy of sharing their own favourite childhood reads with their children. While e-books are great for travel and good for the environment, there's nothing like a 'real' book to hand down through the generations. If books aren't already on your shopping list, why not start a tradition of giving books this Christmas?



Written in collaboration with Times bookstores

Christmas Colours

Short Takes
Christmas Colours

The conventional colours of Christmas – red and green – date all the way back to the 4th century.



JOLLY HOLLY AND RED 'N' GREEN SCREENS

We associate red and green with Christmas because they've always been the hues of the holidays. But have you ever asked yourself – why?

The Christmas colour scheme of red and green can be traced back to the ancient Celts, who revered red and green holly plants for their evergreen persistence in blooming throughout the dead of winter. To bring good luck and protection to their families, they decorated their homes with holly during the winter solstice celebrations.

“Create your very own seasonal feature wall that can be refreshed a few times a year with a simple change of decorations.”

The red-and-green trend continued into the 14th century, when medieval rood screens, the partitions in churches that separated the altar from the congregation, were painted red and green.

THE REAL THING

Cultural and religious traditions aside, possibly the defining moment that cemented red and green into the collective consciousness of Christmas was in 1931. That was the year that Coca-Cola hired a Michigan-born illustrator called Haddon Sundblom to draw Santa Claus!

Until then, Santa was usually depicted as a skinny old man in multi-coloured robes. Sundblom fattened him up and dressed him in his splendid red suit, no doubt to echo the colour of the Coke logo. The ads were so popular that Sundblom's Santa came to be associated with the 'real' Santa. Green was the natural accent colour – the colour of fir trees, holly, poinsettias and elves' outfits.

DECK YOUR HALLS

Though few of us would go to the extreme of painting our interior walls red and green for the holidays, Shelly Chan, Marketing Manager at Nippon Paint Singapore, assures us that bringing Christmas colours into your home is a piece of cake.

“Find a corner in a common room or in your living room and create your very own seasonal feature wall that can be refreshed a few times a year with a simple change of decorations,” advised Shelly. Another Christmas-friendly decorating option is to have a permanent red feature wall. According to Shelly, red feature walls are a macro-trend that shows no sign of abating.

“It's a happy cultural coincidence that red is synonymous with both Christmas and Chinese New Year. Younger homeowners love it for its vibrancy and visual impact, while mature homeowners embrace its auspicious connotations,” said Shelly.

BEYOND RED AND GREEN

Red and green aside, what about a blue and white Christmas? All-time favourites like Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas' and Elvis Presley's 'Blue Christmas' tell us that Christmas colours are more than red and green. It sets one wondering – what are the colours for Christmas in 2018?

Shelly urges homeowners to go boldly beyond red and green when choosing a holiday decorating colour scheme. Navy blue and silver, purple and fuchsia, turquoise and white are all combinations that work beautifully for festive occasions.

Here's wishing one and all a colourful Christmas! 🎄

Sources:

<https://www.rd.com/culture/christmas-colors-green-red/>

<https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/colors-of-christmas.shtml>

Lighting Up the Lives of Our Assisi Hospice Patients

On 30 November, the patients of Assisi Hospice and their families will enjoy the spectacular illumination of a giant 11-metre Christmas tree, together with festive performances, at the annual Assisi Christmas Light-up.

MAKING MEANINGFUL MEMORIES

For the patients of Assisi Hospice and their families, this Christmas will be one to cherish as it may be their last one together. Members of the public can do their part to make this Christmas a magical one for them. Your donation of \$10 will light a bulb on our tree while conveying your well wishes to our patients and their families.

Your donation of \$10 will light a bulb on our tree while conveying your well wishes to our patients and their families.

HELPING US CARE FOR THOSE IN NEED

Your donation will help to enable us to continue provide patients and families with the medical care and psycho-social support they need.

For example, Mr Toh Ah Seng's wife, Mdm Cheok Ai, was diagnosed with stage four cervical cancer in 2017. Due to her intellectual difficulties, Mr Toh was the lone caregiver for their only son, who has autism. Mdm Cheok soon required care beyond what Mr Toh could provide and was admitted to Assisi Hospice in February 2018.



This care arrangement was vital to help Mr Toh cope with his family's needs and to provide him with the space to simply grieve. The sharing of his life story with our social worker in his native Hokkien proved to be a therapeutic outlet for his grief. Assisi Hospice also supported him as he planned his onward journey with his son.

Read more about his story and show your support for our patients and their families at www.giving.sg/assisi-hospice/help_our_patients_and_caregivers_this_christmas





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|---|--|

Price quoted is nett (inclusive of GST). Items in package are not refundable if declined. Health screening is strictly by appointment only.

To find out more, please contact us at Health Screening Centre

Tel: +65 6347 6215 Email: hsc@mtalvernia.sg

Operating Hours: Mon to Fri: 8am - 5pm | Saturday: 8am - 1pm | Sun & PH: Closed



Serve all with Love

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Spreading

In line with our founding values and mission, we continue to reach out to the marginalised and under-served, from the house-bound and homeless elderly of Singapore to a little girl who travelled far from home to find a cure for a debilitating mystery illness.

A LIFE OF PAIN WITH NO HOPE IN SIGHT

For five years, six year-old Channey* lived with severe pain in her legs. She was also unable to pass urine regularly, sometimes going to the toilet only once a day. Doctors in her home country could not diagnose what was ailing her. They concluded that she would lose her ability to walk in a few years' time.

Channey's mum, Thyda*, a beneficiary of Hagar International, suffered with her little girl – caring for her through the nights when she would wake up crying in pain, shedding tears of sympathy and frustration, and worrying constantly about her health and her future.



SEEKING HELP IN SINGAPORE

Hoping for a miracle for Channey and Thyda, the team from Hagar International sought help from Mount Alvernia Hospital's Community Outreach Programme. Channey arrived in Singapore in September and was immediately admitted and attended to by Dr Timothy Lee, our on-campus neurosurgeon.



FROM HOPELESS TO HOPE-FILLED

An X-ray and an MRI scan were ordered but showed no cause for the pain. A subsequent CT scan revealed that little Channey had spina bifida, a congenital spine disorder. However, based on his observation and experience, Dr Lee recognised that Channey could be afflicted with Tethered Spinal Cord Syndrome. His suspicion was aroused when he heard that Channey's pain was neither relieved by any amount of painkillers nor any length of rest – the usual prescription for tired or over-exerted muscles. Furthermore, the unique pattern of weakness in her legs alluded to something more severe.

Spreading Hope

The only way to help Channey was with a relatively simple surgery to relieve the pulling of the nerve.

The operation was a great success. Channey was up and walking again with no more pain.



A HAPPY ENDING AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The operation was a great success. Channey was up and walking again with no more pain. She was also able to go to the toilet on a more regular basis before being discharged after five days of hospitalisation.

In his own words, Dr Lee was happy to have helped Channey and fill her with hope for the future. Seeing Channey's happy, smiling face and her mother's profound sense of relief was a reward in itself.

**Patient's and mother's names have been changed to protect their identities.*

About Tethered Spinal Cord Syndrome

Tethered spinal cord syndrome is a neurological disorder caused by tissue attachments that limit the movement of the spinal cord within the spinal column. These attachments cause an abnormal stretching of the spinal cord. This syndrome is closely associated with spina bifida. While fairly rare, this condition can continue undiagnosed into adulthood or cause problems only during adulthood. In such cases, the strain on the spinal cord will increase, leading to increasing sensory and motor problems and occasionally loss of bladder and bowel control. Patients may have unexplained back ache or pain in or weakness of the legs, which may be wrongly attributed to psychological reasons as MRI scan results of the spine are often normal as in Channey's case.

Source:
<https://www.aans.org/Patients/Neurosurgical-Conditions-and-Treatments/Tethered-Spinal-Cord-Syndrome>

About Hagar International

Hagar is an international organisation dedicated to the recovery of women and children who have endured extreme abuses. They are working to see communities free and healed from the trauma of human trafficking, slavery and abuse.



Dr Timothy Lee, Neurosurgeon
The Brain and Spine Clinic
Medical Centre D #08-63



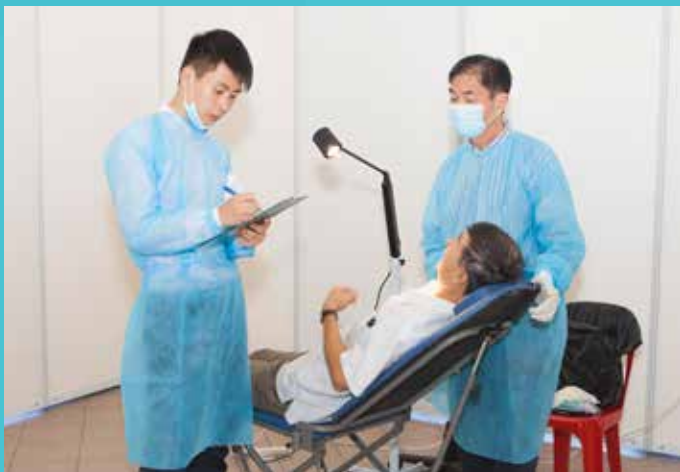
MEETING THE NEEDS OF SINGAPOREAN RESIDENTS

Though we are fortunate to live in an affluent first-world society, there are many Singaporeans and foreign workers who do not enjoy the privileges that most of us take for granted. Here are some of the humble ways in which we have been reaching out to them and filling their lives with comfort and hope.



PUTTING SMILES ON THE FACES OF THOSE IN NEED

In partnership with the Singapore Dental Health Foundation (SDHF), Mount Alvernia Hospital staff assist with the registration of patients for dental charting and dental counselling conducted by volunteer dentists from SDHF. If necessary, we facilitate referrals to our outreach dental clinic for dental care.



BEFRIENDING THE HOMELESS

The team from Mount Alvernia Hospital's Community Outreach Programme regularly work with Homeless Hearts of Singapore, a volunteer group that reaches out to the homeless in the Chinatown, Bugis, Bras Basah Road, Victoria Street, Queen Street and Stamford Road areas. Should any of these homeless friends need medical or dental care, we make arrangements for them to visit our outreach clinics.

SUBSIDISING DENTAL CARE FOR DOMESTIC HELPERS

Since April 2018, our dental outreach clinic has been providing low-cost basic dental care to domestic helpers at \$30 per procedure. The response has been heartening, with employers clearly more willing to cover their helpers' dental expenses when the costs are capped. We regularly receive referrals from Healthserve and HOME, and have seen over 200 patients to date.



CONDUCTING HEALTH CHECKS FOR WORLD HEART DAY

In September, Mount Alvernia Hospital conducted health checks for 250 people at Toa Payoh HDB Hub in support of Singapore Heart Foundation for World Heart Day 2018. This year's event differed from those of previous years by replacing the usual fasting venous blood test with a Haemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) test. The HbA1c test involves a simple finger prick, which provides an indication of the patient's average blood glucose levels over the past three months within a mere two minutes. In addition to the HbA1c test, we had other stations measuring height, weight, Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood pressure.

In particular, when the team encountered a senior not taking their medication as instructed by their doctors, we sought to identify the reason for the lapse and get the patient back on track through detailed explanation and education.

Since April 2018, our dental outreach clinic has been providing low-cost basic dental care to domestic helpers at \$30 per procedure.



BRINGING MEDICAL REVIEWS INTO THE HOMES OF THE ELDERLY

With the aim of bringing healthcare to home-bound seniors, the Home Visit Outreach Programme ventured beyond the Lengkok Bahru estate to the ageing Bukit Merah community. Partnering with the team and student volunteers from the Duke-NUS Medical School, we conducted medical investigations and history taking, provided education on medication awareness and dispensed general advice on healthy diet and exercising.



PROVIDING HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE FOR SENIORS AT OUR OUTREACH CLINIC

Since September, a group of nurses have been attending to more mobile seniors at our twice-weekly outreach clinics at the Enabling Village at Lengkok Bahru. We provide a range of relevant services including monitoring and education on chronic diseases and fall prevention; dementia and depression screening and referrals; advice on caregiver stress; and referrals for care coordination and home visits.



TENDING TO FOREIGN WORKERS FAR FROM HOME

Every fortnight, the team sets up a makeshift clinic at the TWC2 Dayspace, an area managed by a non-profit organisation, Transient Workers Count Too – TWC2. To date, we have treated workers with a variety of skin conditions, work-related injuries, wounds and aches and pains.

We look forward to serving all with love in the months and years to come. ^A

HELPING SENIORS STAY FLU-FREE

Staying healthy during the flu season is especially crucial for the elderly, as flu can lead to high fever and pneumonia. To help seniors survive and thrive throughout the flu season, the outreach team ventured to the East to administer vaccinations to seniors under the care of the TRANS Family Service Centre (Bedok).



DELIVERING HEALTHCARE AND SECOND CHANCES TO THOSE IN NEED

In March, the Mount Alvernia Hospital outreach team visited the Green Haven Halfway House at Admiralty Road East, set up by the Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services to help ex-offenders get back on their feet and progressively integrate into society. The team conducted health screenings and flu vaccinations for the residents and their family members and set up a mobile clinic.

We have treated foreign workers with a variety of skin conditions, work-related injuries, wounds and aches and pains.

In addition to Green Haven, we have also partnered with Jamiyah Halfway House, whose residents and family members also received general health screenings and flu vaccinations.

A Remarkably Giving Individual



When it comes to giving back, Shirley Tay, Director, Nursing is a role model. A member of the curriculum advisory board for Griffith University's School of Nursing and Midwifery on a pro bono basis, she assesses the relevance and accountability of the academic programme by providing guidance and feedback.

A practising nurse for 38 years, Shirley has vast experience across medical clinics, private and restructured government hospitals, clinical quality, clinical informatics, healthcare management, operating theatres, ambulatory services and the Joint Commission International Standards. As such, she provides an emerging perspective in nursing practice theory balanced with empirical knowledge, in line with the requirements of the Singapore Nursing Board for all registered nurses.

"It benefits both the nurses and the healthcare institutions that they are joining, because it immediately closes the expectation gap while they are actually on the job and hence quickens their learning curve," said Shirley, a graduate from the Griffith University Class of 2006. It comes as no surprise that Shirley was recently named Outstanding International Alumnus Award 2018 by Griffith University.

Shirley also contributes in other areas of hospital life. She is part of a choir who sang and recorded a Christmas choral album to help raise endowment funds for patients with financial difficulties. She also visits nursing homes to take part in working bees comprising painting and cleaning.

Beyond home, Shirley has taken the spirit of giving to developing countries. She taught nurses in rural Cambodia on paediatric care and went as a member of the Rotary Club to conduct dental hygiene talks at schools in Bhutan and distribute donated winter clothing to orphanages and monks living in the mountains.

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Take Heart, Live Healthy!

Cautionary Notes and Hope-filled Highlights

Mount Alvernia Hospital recently presented a sold-out seminar on heart health and wellness, organised by Channel NewsAsia and sponsored by Abbott and Aviva. It was held on the afternoon of Saturday 29 September in the Ballroom of Conrad Centennial Singapore.

FIVE DOCTORS, COUNTLESS INSIGHTS

Five cardiologists delivered engaging talks that dispelled the myths surrounding heart disease and heart attacks. For one hour prior to the talks, guests were invited to take advantage of free health screenings.

Here is a summary of the speakers and their topics, along with highlights of their talks.

SURVIVING A HEART ATTACK

Dr Soon Chao Yang, Interventional Cardiologist at The Heart Doctors' Clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital, gave an engaging talk on 'Surviving a Heart Attack – Past, Present and Future'. He started with the big picture by stating that about one third of all deaths worldwide are caused by heart attacks. In Singapore, that figure is around one fifth of all deaths. And with advances in management and treatment, survival rates continue to improve.

Dr Soon dispelled the myth that heart disease is mainly a man's disease and pointed out that only slightly more men die of heart attacks than women. He also pointed out the interesting fact that the signs of having a heart attack differ for men and women. The road to survival begins with recognition, which entails recognising the signs and, if possible, performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). A quick poll of the audience showed that only five out of 500 attendees knew how to use an AED – shockingly, only 1 percent of the audience!



GATHERING INFORMATION VIA IMAGING

Dr Ho Kheng Thye, Senior Consultant Cardiologist, Heart Consultants Pte Ltd at Mount Alvernia Hospital, explained the differences between non-invasive imaging techniques such as computed tomography (CT) scans and invasive imaging techniques such as angiograms in his talk entitled 'How Do Cardiologists Decide What to Do for Patients'.

Dr Ho cited real-life case studies from among his patients, including a complex case whereby a heart attack patient was concurrently suffering from colon cancer. On the basis of the CT perfusion results and the angiogram, the peri-operative risk of cancer surgery was deemed too high – in other words, there was a high chance that he would suffer a heart attack on the operating table. Hence, the patient was treated with angioplasty and stenting prior to chemotherapy, which was performed while the patient was on anti-clotting medication that can promote bleeding. The chemotherapy prevented the the tumour from spreading, and cancer surgery was performed six months later when he came off the anti-clotting medication. It was a sterling example of an integrated approach to clinical decision-making that led to a successful patient outcome.



DEBUNKING COMMON MYTHS

Dr Brian Khoo, Consultant Cardiologist, Nobel Heart Centre at Mount Alvernia Hospital, demystified common misconceptions about heart disease in his talk '5 Commonly Asked Questions to Your Cardiologist'. He shared the recurring questions asked by his patients in his practice, which are almost always about the hot topic of cholesterol.



Focusing on preventive medicine as opposed to interventional medicine, Dr Khoo spoke at length about the group of cholesterol medicines known as statins. Despite the bad press they receive, he emphasised their potentially life-saving efficacy in lowering dangerously high cholesterol levels. He also touched on taking aspirin as a contentious form of secondary prevention, which reduces the risk of heart attacks but not fatal ones. On a cautionary note, he pointed out that aspirin increases the risk of potentially fatal bleeding.

MEDICATION EDUCATION

Dr Tan Kok Soon, Senior Consultant Cardiologist, Orchard Heart Specialist Clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital, spoke about the benefits and side-effects of various types of heart medication in his talk 'Taking Medicine for the Heart: The Do's and Don'ts'. He started with a personal 'confession'. While he follows a healthy lifestyle, he nonetheless takes some medicine for his cholesterol.



Dr Tan referenced the findings of a recent National Population Health Survey that showed a surprisingly high incidence of high blood pressure – 23.6 percent of men and 19.6 percent of women; and an even more alarmingly high incidence of high cholesterol – 40.9 percent of men and 26.6 percent of women. He went on to explain the importance of taking medication on a regular basis, and shared a tip for linking it to a daily habit such as taking breakfast. In addition, he emphasised the importance of consulting your doctor before taking additional medication to avoid the risk of dangerous drug-drug interactions.

Medications aside, Dr Tan lauded the benefits of one simple way to improve heart health – by eating less salt!

HEARTFELT ADVICE ON THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Dr Derek Yong, Interventional Cardiologist, Restore Heart Centre at Mount Alvernia Hospital, spoke eloquently on 'Exercising the Heart'. He began by sharing his philosophy



that the mind and body should never be treated separately, after which he shared holiday snaps of his family's annual pilgrimage to Japan. His highly personal address drew on examples from his own life. He explained how he schedules almost three hours of tennis a day into his life, and constantly educates his extended family on heart health.



Dr Yong's personal anecdotes all led to one point – the importance of exercising. However, on a cautionary note, he cited recent examples of elite athletes dying of cardiac arrest and conceded that high-intensity sports and high-endurance marathons may trigger cardiac arrests. Above all, he advocates regular low-intensity exercise such as brisk walking and housework.

The final speaker of the seminar, Dr Yong left his audience with this serious food for thought: 50 percent of recent heart attack victims in Singapore never knew they were at risk!

That fact alone speaks volumes about the need for educating the public on heart health. Mount Alvernia Hospital was proud to have played a part in doing just that. ■

National Heart Week/ World Heart Day 2018



World Heart Day is annually celebrated by member organisations of the World Heart Federation in over 100 countries. It aims to increase public awareness and promote preventive measures to reduce the global incidence of cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke).

In Singapore, Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF) has been celebrating National Heart Week since 1971. In 2000, the World Heart Federation launched World Heart Day. Since then, SHF has been annually celebrating World Heart Day and National Heart Week concurrently.

Source:
<http://www.myheart.org.sg/article/community-education/national-heart-week--world-heart-day/about/111>

Cookies for Milk

Lactation cookies have been selling like hotcakes in Singapore. We asked Ms Kang Phaik Gaik, Head of Parentcraft/Lactation at Mount Alvernia Hospital, and Tan Shiling, Senior Dietitian at Mount Alvernia Hospital, for their views on these munchies for mummies.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Lactation cookies are, as their name suggests, cookies that promote lactation in nursing mums. They are typically loaded with ingredients that promote lactation, known as galactagogues. Common galactagogues include brewer's yeast, oats, flaxseed meal and fenugreek.



"I do have clients tell me they have seen increased milk supply after eating lactation cookies."



Though the concept is not a new one, lactation cookies really caught on in Singapore just a year or two ago. Enter 'lactation cookies' into any search engine and literally pages and pages of local home bakers will appear. Many of the business owners are in fact mums who once faced problems with their own milk production.

An experienced lactation consultant, Ms Kang stops short of recommending lactation cookies but does not deny their efficacy.

"As lactation consultants, we don't recommend specific products to our clients. Rather, we focus on correcting their latching technique. But I do have clients tell me they have seen increased milk supply

after eating lactation cookies, and I just say okay, as long as it's hygienic," said Ms Kang.

BEWARE SUGAR TRAPS

While dietitian Shiling voices no strong objections to lactation cookies, she warns mums against idly munching away without considering the calories they are consuming.

"While breastfeeding expends around 400 to 500 calories a day, excess calorie intake during breastfeeding may result in a slower rate of weight loss or may even cause unexpected weight gain," said Shiling.

Shiling points out that the amount of lactation cookies that must be consumed to produce a measurable increase in breast milk production appears to vary from mum to mum. Hence the risk of 'overdose' increases for those women who need to eat large quantities of cookies to step up their milk production.

"Moreover, doctors have issued cautions regarding the oral intake of brewer's yeast for nursing mothers," shared Shiling. "Fenugreek, the most commonly used galactagogue, is linked to the fact that fenugreek stimulates sweat production and the breast is a modified sweat gland. This may explain how fenugreek works."



MODERATION AND HYDRATION

Shiling suggests a more practical approach to ensure good breast milk supply would be to eat a well-balanced diet and maintain good hydration. Then, all being well, nursing mums will savour the sweet taste of successful breastfeeding – with or without lactation cookies. ■

More is More

At Mount Alvernia Hospital, we are delighted to have delivered the children of hundreds of big families over the years. Hence we have witnessed first-hand the abundance of joy that is part of 'the package'. More laughter, more love, more good times to share and more mutual support – these are just some of the many advantages of a big family. Deliver three children or more at Mount Alvernia Hospital and you'll be overjoyed in more ways than one!



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Your Diet Matters

for a Healthy Birth Outcome

Part 2
of a 2-part series.
Part 1 was contributed
by Abbott and
appeared in Issue 35
of My Alvernia.

You often hear it said that when you're pregnant you're 'eating for two'. But that doesn't mean you should eat double of everything. Sarah Sinaram, Head of Nutrition and Dietetics Department at Mount Alvernia Hospital, explains why diet matters more than ever when you're expecting.

HOW MUCH MORE

According to the Health Promotion Board (HPB), pregnant women require a surprisingly modest 300 or so calories a day more than their pre-pregnancy requirements, depending on their activity levels. To help you visualise those extra calories in real terms, ponder this – one bowl of fishball noodles, served dry, has about 370 calories, a plate of nasi lemak has 494 calories and one piece of plain roti prata has around 200 calories.

As you can see, it can be easy to chalk up the calories when eating out, which may lead to excessive weight gain. Gaining excess weight in pregnancy increases a woman's risk of developing gestational



diabetes and hypertension. The extra kilos can also make childbirth difficult, which in turn prolongs mum's postnatal recovery. Overweight mums also tend to have larger babies who will be at risk of becoming obese and diabetic in later life.



In truth, there is no one 'super food' that will ensure a healthier, stronger, fairer or smarter baby. Instead, mums-to-be should eat a healthy, balanced diet with food from all four food groups.

On the other hand, gaining too little weight may cause premature birth or a low birth weight baby. Women who suffer from morning sickness may have trouble keeping food down and even lose weight in the early months. Thankfully, morning sickness usually improves in the second trimester, when weight gain picks up. Given the importance of adequate hydration and nutrition, pregnant women who are gaining too little weight, or not at all, should ask their doctor for advice on managing their nausea and meeting their nutritional needs.

Sarah explains why variety is important to ensure that you get the right balance of nutrients. "Different food groups contain different types of nutrients. For instance, fruits are rich in Vitamin C and dietary fibre but lack protein," said Sarah.

ABOUT VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS

The number of pregnancy supplements on the market attests to the importance of folic acid, iron and calcium intake.



"It's always best to speak to your doctor about supplementation, as he or she will understand your unique requirements and provide you with the appropriate advice."

ALWAYS ASK YOUR DOCTOR

Though well-meaning family members may ply a pregnant loved one with advice, urging them to eat some specific traditional supplement, or to refrain from eating very 'heaty' and very 'cooling' foods, mums-to-be should always consult a doctor before adopting these practices.



Sarah confirms that women should take note of their folic acid, iron and calcium intakes. Folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects while iron supports babies' growth and development. It is common for mothers to develop low blood counts in pregnancy as the blood volume increases in pregnancy. Iron supplementation will help to prevent this. Calcium helps maintain mothers' bone density and babies' bone development.

"Pregnant women who are vegans may need to look into their Vitamin B12 and omega-3 intake," advised Sarah. "However, it's always best to speak to your doctor about supplementation, as he or she will understand your unique requirements and provide you with the appropriate advice."

A WINDOW OF INFLUENCE ON A LIFETIME OF HEALTH

A healthy diet during pregnancy can have a positive impact on your baby's entire lifetime. But it doesn't stop there. After delivery, a healthy diet plays a key role in successful breastfeeding. And, of course, mums (and dads) should continue to eat well and set a good example to their children as they grow into healthy adults. ■



Understanding Stretch Marks

Though usually associated with pregnancy, stretch marks can occur whenever the skin is suddenly stretched.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Stretch marks, or *striae gravidarum*, are caused by the breakage of the elastic fibres just under the surface of the skin. They first appear as long, narrow streaks, stripes or lines that are reddish or purplish in colour. Over time, they fade to white or silver.

Though they are often associated with pregnancy, stretch marks can occur on both women and men. Common causes of stretch marks include pregnancy, body building, puberty, sudden growth spurts and rapid weight gain.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

The risk of developing stretch marks varies according to skin type, age, diet and hydration of the skin.

During pregnancy, the regular use of stretch mark lotions, oils or creams can help the skin maintain or even strengthen its elasticity so that it is better able to withstand the major stretching that occurs to accommodate the growth of a new life. Keeping weight within a healthy range, by eating well and exercising regularly, can also help to prevent stretch marks during pregnancy.

The areas of the body that are most prone to stretch marks are the abdomen, breasts, hips, buttocks and thighs, where larger amounts of body fat are stored.

There are several types of aesthetic treatment that may help to reduce the appearance of stretch marks. These include laser therapy, needling and microdermabrasion.

For example, microneedling with radio frequency is a common aesthetic procedure that involves pricking tiny holes in the skin to promote its healing and thereby help shed the scars. Concurrently, radio-frequency lasers warm up the deeper layers under the skin that are responsible for the regeneration of collagen, thereby helping to tighten the stretch marks.

As for oils and creams, stretch mark products enriched with Vitamin E and Argan Oil can be highly beneficial in encouraging the regeneration of healthy skin cells and improving the skin's elasticity with essential fatty acids.

PROGNOSIS

Though stretch marks cannot be totally removed, they do get lighter over time. And while no amount of creams, lotions, and oils can make the marks disappear entirely, they can help tone, tauten and lighten the skin.

Of course, the top priority for most pregnant women is the delivery of a healthy baby. Chances are that a few stretch marks will pale into insignificance alongside the joy that a baby brings. ■

Glow as You Grow

Stretch marks aside, a woman's skin undergoes many major changes during pregnancy. At around 11 weeks, a surge of hormones and an increase in blood volume bring blood closer to the surface of the skin. Hence the pregnancy 'glow'. However, there are other less welcome changes to the skin. These include:

Pigmentation Issues

The colour of a woman's intimate areas and the centre of her tummy will begin to darken, along with existing freckles and moles. Melasma, dark blemishes on the cheeks, forehead, nose and chin, may also occur. These pigmentation issues generally go away on their own after delivery. Meanwhile, sunblock with a high sun protection factor (SPF) should be applied to prevent further darkening.

Tummy Tracks

During pregnancy, many women will start seeing a faint white line from their navel to the centre of the pubic bone. This is called a *linea alba*. In the second trimester, the line may darken, and is then known as a *linea nigra*. It too will almost definitely go away after delivery.

Acne Outbreaks

Oil and sweat glands are more active during pregnancy. This can cause pimples and acne. Skin should be kept clean, but baths should be limited to once a day and intense scrubbing should be avoided.

Source:
<https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1576/4-skin-care-tips-to-keep-your-pregnancy-glow>

Written in collaboration with Biolane

Teething Remedies

What to expect when your baby starts teething and what you can do to ease its symptoms.

TELLTALE SIGNS

Strictly speaking, teething begins when a baby's teeth emerge from the gum. "There can be some local discomfort or pain at the point where the teeth have broken through the gum. There may even be a small amount of bleeding. Babies often start drooling more, and can become fussy and irritable," said Dr Terence Tan, Consultant Paediatrician and Neonatologist from Kinder Clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital.

Opinions are divided when it comes to the question of whether teething actually causes fever or diarrhoea. Dr Tan assures us that any symptoms of fever and diarrhoea due to teething are very mild and in many cases may not occur at all. If symptoms of fever or diarrhoea are severe, then the cause is probably not teething and likely to be due to an infection.

EASING THE PAIN OF TEETHING

There are many ways to relieve the discomfort associated with teething. However, the use of teething gels containing numbing medication such as benzocaine and lidocaine has been associated with some adverse reactions. Dr Tan urges parents to consult their doctor before using these products.

Aside from medication, there are several safe and effective strategies to soothe the symptoms of teething.

These include:

- give your baby a cold (refrigerated but not frozen) teether, teething ring or teething toy (make sure it's BPA-free or made from natural rubber)
- let your baby chew on teething rusks
- let your baby chew on a chilled towel or washcloth
- offer your baby chilled fresh fruit
- rub your baby's gums with a clean finger



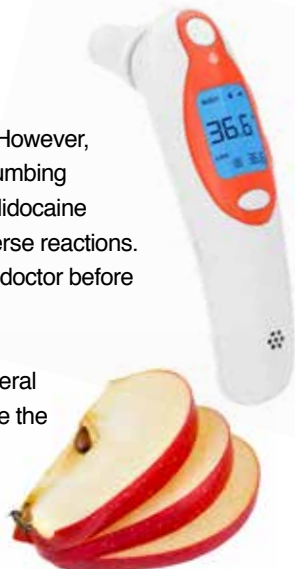
If your baby needs additional pain relief, a low dose of paracetamol may be helpful.

WHEN THE SYMPTOMS PERSIST

Dr Tan emphasises that most babies who experience discomfort due to teething have mild, short-lived symptoms. If the symptoms are severe or prolonged beyond one or two days, it is safer to consult the doctor. In situations where there is high fever, vomiting, bad diarrhoea or extreme loss of appetite, the main priority is to rule out serious infections, and the baby should be seen by a doctor earlier rather than later.

SMILE!

The best part about teething is that it comes to an end. When your little one finally has a full set of pearly baby teeth, it's reason for everyone to smile. ☺



Dr Terence Tan
Consultant Paediatrician and Neonatologist
Kinder Clinic, Medical Centre A #06-03/04



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Moving Away from Baby Talk

Thow Mei Kuen, Senior Speech Therapist at the Rehabilitation Centre of Mount Alvernia Hospital, explains how babies go from 'goo goo gaa gaa' to speaking and reading.

SPONTANEOUS LEARNING

Babies can understand what you are saying long before they can clearly speak. According to Mei Kuen, babies start learning language from the day they are born, through the perception of body language, gestures and auditory input. Some research even suggests that learning starts in the womb, from as early as 10 weeks old.

In bilingual environments, babies will learn and acquire both languages. For example, a grandparent may only speak to the baby in dialect, while the parents only use English. The language to which the baby is exposed the most is likely to become the dominant language. "Babies are able to learn more than you can imagine!" Mei Kuen added.

"Start with awareness first before diving straight in to letter recognition."

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

The success and speed of your baby picking up a language depends on how many languages are being introduced and how consistently the same word is being used in reference to an object.

"For example, in an English-only environment, a parent might call milk by a variety of words – from 'mmm', 'bottle', 'wa wa' to 'mu mu'. If the word is not used consistently and frequently, the baby may not be able to associate the word with the object," cautioned Mei Kuen.

Mei Kuen urges all parents and caregivers to talk and interact with their babies as much as possible. The more they hear, the more they will listen and learn by connecting words with their surroundings, and the sooner they will talk.

AND NOW TIME TO READ

Mei Kuen advises that you can start reading to your baby as early as possible, so long as the reading materials are age-appropriate. However, there is another school of thought that believes reading should be introduced at a much later age.

"Start with awareness first before diving straight in to letter recognition," suggested Mei Kuen. Most babies like to help turn the pages of books that are being read to them, and may even point to the pictures that interest them or have been highlighted repeatedly to them. They may even start 'choosing' the books they want their parents to read to them! ■

At the age of...	... most children can...
3 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sing the alphabet song• recognise the first letter of their name• enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks• understand that printed text conveys messages• attempt to read and write• associate letters with sounds• identify familiar signs and labels
4 to 5 years old	recognise most letters of the alphabet



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6 Parenting Tips to Bring Out the Best in Your Child

So you're a new parent, congratulations! Now that you've welcomed a new life on earth, there are some parenting tips you need to know.



LESSONS TO LEARN ON THE FLY... AND RULES TO LIVE BY

Some parenting 101s are best learned on the fly – like how to change monstrously-soiled diapers without fainting, or how to keep your cool when your child vandalises the walls with stickman drawings, to name a few. But there are also some other things that you can be mentally or financially prepared for, even before the arrival of your baby.

From their physical to intellectual well-being, there are tons of bases to cover. So here are the top parenting tips every new mum and dad needs to know to maximise their child's potential.

Here we go...

1 FEED THEM WELL

This one's a bit of a no-brainer, but here's some layman science behind it. The foundations of good health are laid during children's early years, when they're developing most rapidly. Their nourishment affects not only their health but also their behavioural and cognitive development – their ability to learn, communicate and socialise. So take care to feed your infant well – this includes not only feeding them what is needed, but also when it's needed.

Look for early signs of hunger such as stirring and sucking motions, instead of only dashing to the supermarket when your child starts to cry frantically. And then there's the importance of breastfeeding. The hormones and antibodies



in breast milk strengthen your child's immune system, lowering their risk of illnesses and diseases, from the common flu to even asthma and eczema. This protection is unique and changes according to your infant's development – something that baby formula cannot duplicate.

2 GET THE RIGHT JABS

When your child is at their earliest stages in life, they are most vulnerable to diseases, so getting them properly vaccinated is the most powerful defence against this.

In Singapore, the National Immunisation Registry ensures that your child gets all of the mandatory immunisations. But there are also optional ones such as the rotavirus, chickenpox and influenza vaccines that you should consider.



3

BUDGET WISELY

You won't want to realise you're out of diapers only after your baby does a big one in their pants. You won't want to realise you're out of funds only when a financially pressing situation arises, either.

Assume the largest expenses. Consider what-if situations: our current living situation costs S\$X month, but would it potentially increase?

Your growing family will come with growing expenditure on food, utilities, clothing and healthcare. Work out a new budget that reflects your new lifestyle and keep an expenses log. Try to keep to the budget you set for a few months, but if that proves too difficult, make little modifications to fine-tune it until you get a budget that works for you – remember, being a great money manager takes time and experience.

It may mean eliminating non-essential items on your expenses list (like magazines, extra shoes or a winter coat you could wear if you win that trip to Finland in the lucky draw at your company's year-end party!), looking out for sales, making use of loyalty points on your purchases or taking advantage of lower prices for bulk buys on infant necessities.

4

GET HEALTH COVERAGE FOR YOUR CHILD

Getting health insurance for your children while they're young and healthy would mean you get to enjoy a lower premium and that any new medical condition that subsequently develops will be covered.

Whilst Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents are covered by MediShield Life, which provides basic coverage on hospitalisation and surgical costs, taking up Integrated Shield Plans such as Aviva's MyShield will grant you higher coverage so you have the option to receive treatment at higher class wards or private hospitals, and still be covered for the greater costs incurred.



5

INVEST IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Give a man a fish and he'll be hungry in an hour; teach a man to fish and you'll feed him for a lifetime.



Really, though, the best investment you can make for your child is in their education. Make plans to ensure that your child will have sufficient funds to see them through their student life.

A local university education costs at least S\$30,000 per annum (and we're only talking about the basic fees), or even more if they decide to enter certain fields such as dentistry.

Or is your child considering studying overseas, which would cost a whole lot more? Plan for the unplanned.

There are a variety of different savings options available.

6

MAKE SURE YOU'LL BE THERE EVERY STEP OF THEIR WAY

The best thing you can do for your loved ones is to take care of yourself. Financially, this rings true as well.



Your child is completely financially dependent on you and your spouse, so it's important to have a back-up plan should you no longer be able to provide for the family.

MAXIMISE YOUR CHILD'S POTENTIAL

Parenthood... It's equal parts rewarding but also worrying. There's so much to think about, and changing your kid's diapers is only the beginning.

You'll inevitably find yourself thrown into unexpected situations sometimes – especially when we're talking about something as big as raising a child – and insurance is a small price to pay to give you greater peace of mind. Maximise your child's potential and don't leave their future at the mercy of what-ifs with these parenting tips. ■

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Is My Toddler Eating Well?

It's only natural that parents are concerned about whether their toddler is eating enough, and enough of the right things. Tan Shiling, Senior Dietitian, Nutrition and Dietetics Department, Mount Alvernia Hospital, shares some healthy nutritional guidelines for little ones.

INGREDIENTS OF A HEALTHY DIET

A healthy, balanced diet for a toddler is similar to that for an older child and adult in that it follows the healthy plate concept, according to Shiling. The main difference is that the serving size should be smaller for a toddler compared to an older child and adult. In addition, it is recommended to include dairy or calcium-enriched food as part of a toddler's diet.

This table shows the number of serving sizes required for different age groups.

Food Groups / Age Group	6 – 12 months	1 – 2 years	3 – 6 years	7 – 18 years	Adults
Brown Rice and Wholemeal Bread	1 – 2	2 – 3	3 – 4	5 – 6	5 – 7
Fruits	½	½ – 1	1	2	2
Vegetables	½	½	1	2	2
Meat and Others	½	½	1	2	2 – 3
**Dairy foods or calcium containing foods	1½ or 750ml milk	1½ or 750ml milk	1 or 500ml milk	1 or 500ml milk	Not Specified

For details on what constitutes one serving, please visit <https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/55/my-healthy-plate>.

****Note:** For infants aged 6 months – 12 months, their dairy foods or calcium-rich foods servings should be provided in the form of 750ml breast milk or infant formula. Children from 1 year of age may choose fresh milk or calcium-fortified soymilk as their daily milk serving. Children 2 years and above may choose low fat or skimmed milk as their daily milk serving, unless advised otherwise by their doctor or dietitian.

WHEN TO WEAN

While breast milk provides all the nutrients that your infant requires in the first months of life, solid foods should be introduced at around six months. At this age, a toddler's protein and micronutrient needs increase as well as their natural curiosity about food. If you let them joyfully explore the different tastes and textures of their food, and offer them a variety of food at regular intervals, their tastes will naturally develop and their nutritional needs should be automatically met. Adopting good nutrition practices early on in life will pave the way for a lifelong healthy relationship with food.



REGULAR MEALTIMES AND SNACK TIMES

Instead of allowing your child to graze at will throughout the day, a structured eating plan with intervals of two to three hours between mealtimes is a better idea, according to Shiling. She suggests aiming for three main meals and two to three snacks in between them.

Ideally, you should let your child eat until they are full rather than force them to eat everything on their plate. Allowing them to follow their hunger and satiety cues helps to reduce picky eating and encourages a positive feeding environment. It also teaches them that if they don't eat enough, they will get hungry before their next meal. Conversely, forcing them to eat more than they want may lead to coercive feeding methods that could adversely affect their relationship with food.

HOW TO PICK A PICKY EATER

Many mums and dads fret over their toddlers' fussy eating habits. However, if there are no growth concerns, Shiling assures us that fussy eating may not be a major issue. You should simply continue to offer your child a variety of food and encourage them to explore new tastes and textures.

Below are some common signs to help you determine if your child is a picky eater.

- Your child has difficulties accepting semi-solid food when around six to 12 months old.
- They are still having 'baby food' or meals cooked separately from the adults' meal at 16 or 18 months old.
- Your child has a history of being force-fed or has to be force-fed.
- They avoid ALL foods of a particular texture or colour or a specified food group (for example, all types of meat or all vegetables).
- Your child eats less than 20 different types of food.
- They require TV, toys or smartphone gadgets to distract them during feeding.
- Mealtimes can take more than 30 minutes to complete.

FUEL FOR HEALTHY GROWTH

Besides monitoring your child's food intake, you should monitor your child's weight and height growth. These can be found in their health booklet (given to them at the hospital when the child is born). During each routine check since infancy, the paediatrician will plot the child's weight, height and head circumference in the respective chart.

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Paediatric Nutrition Care Manual, a healthy rate of weight gain for a toddler (aged one to two years old) is 2.5kg per year. For toddlers aged two to three years old, it is 2kg per year.

It is important that your child gains sufficient weight during this intensive period of early physical and mental development. Inadequate nutrition puts them at risk of anaemia, which can affect optimal brain development, and may lead to attention problems, delays in reading ability and consequently poor academic performance. On the other hand, excessive weight gain puts your child at risk of childhood obesity, which in turn may lead to numerous other conditions such as glucose intolerance, dyslipidemia, polycystic ovarian syndrome, fatty liver disease and hypertension, to name a few.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If your child stubbornly refuses to eat and routinely spits out a petulant 'No!' when offered new types of food, or they are not meeting their developmental milestones, you should discuss your concerns with your doctor or paediatrician. After ruling out possible underlying causes such as gastroesophageal reflux, food intolerance, conditions involving the heart, lungs or endocrine system, or any one of a number of eating problems, they may refer you to a dietitian.

Meanwhile, lead by example. When your little one sees mummy and daddy enjoying a variety of wholesome foods, chances are they will follow your healthy lead. 🍴



Hope

Springs Eternal

by Anthony Goh

My late father had a theory that life could be broken down into four stages: preparation, achievement, fulfilment and completion. Hope is the thread that links them all, and the source of the momentum that carries us forward.

CHILDHOOD HOPES

The seeds of hope that blossomed throughout my childhood years were planted by my parents. Though they suffered terribly throughout the wartime years, enduring poverty and sorrow that included the deaths of some of my siblings in their infancy, they remained ever optimistic.

Besides caring for their family, my hardworking and responsible parents made themselves useful to society. Mum looked after two babies from rich families and yet found time to lead a Catholic prayer group and care for sick neighbours. Dad served as a 3-star

civilian officer appointed by the Japanese military to take care of the village and take charge of the food rations with fairness and integrity. He also found time to school us on our ABCs and taught us the value of hard work by telling us stories like 'The Ant and the Grasshopper' from Aesops' Fables, together with Chinese stories about filial piety. His motto – "Unless you have served, you have not lived."

At the same time, Dad was a stern disciplinarian who never spared the cane for lying, misbehaviour or laziness. Whenever he was home, he made sure that we applied ourselves to schoolwork and worked hard at every task assigned to us.

Through their loving discipline and exemplary conduct, my parents instilled in me the values that shaped my character. Their lives showed me that hardship is a great source of motivation for hard work. This lesson led to a deeply ingrained work ethic that has served me well to this day.

Above all, my most fervent childhood hope was articulated in my daily prayer that my parents would never fall sick and die, for I believed that I could never live without them.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

For a short while, during my teens, I harboured the unrealistic hope that my parents would send me to study in Australia as some neighbours' kids were doing. When Dad broke it to me that the family finances could not stretch that far, I took it in my stride and did the next best thing. I became a teacher in my alma mater for 18 months.

My father impressed upon me that I was born intelligent. His constant positive reinforcement filled me with a faith in myself that has never left me. I do not mean to sound boastful – on the contrary, I am humbled by and grateful for the faith that was invested in me by my loving parents.

After a 2-year sabbatical during which I read a library's worth of books, it was time to find work. I first found a job with an Indian commodity trader, where I learned trading for a year. From 1959 to 1962, I worked as an accounts clerk in a Dutch shipping company, where I started a trade union branch for its employees. Then for the next 18 months I worked with a Belgian commodity trading firm. Thereafter I worked in a local shipyard as Production Controller from 1963 to 1972.

Then came a turning point in my life. Aged 35, buoyed up with confidence from the lessons learned and experience gained from my four employers, I had high hopes of becoming a successful entrepreneur. But life had other things in store for me.

HOPE UNDER FIRE

My naturally optimistic nature was challenged at the age of 65. When I should have been happily retired, I encountered the darkest moments of my life.

With an empty pocket and zero assets to fall back on, an imminent divorce and an eviction notice from my landlord, I had lost almost everything. But instead of dwelling on my losses, I reminded myself to count my blessings and focused on all that I had.

I had a small amount of remaining CPF which I could fall back on for a short while. Some small assets around the apartment

had been spared by sympathetic creditors because of my honest dealings with them. A handful of friends offered to help with money, which I respectfully declined. Others called to sympathise with me, which I will never forget. But my most treasured asset of all was my 4-year-old daughter, the result of my second marriage.

Throughout this dark period, I recalled the sufferings my parents had endured and survived. Their strong faith saved them. And here was I facing the same fate. I prayed for divine guidance.

In the midst of it all, I received a phone call from my Thai banker friend. He had heard of my plight and asked me to help him manage his Chinese restaurant in Bangkok, commencing as soon as I was ready. And so I made my way to live and work in Bangkok, motivated by the thought of my daughter and inspired by the memories of my loving parents.

“I worked hard, cleared my debts, and here I am today, sharing my story of how indefatigable hard work and invincible hope helped me overcome adversity.”

The rest, as they say, is history. I worked hard, cleared my debts, and here I am today, sharing my story of how indefatigable hard work and invincible hope helped me overcome adversity. May it fill you with the hope that you too will overcome whatever challenges you might be facing in your lives today.

HOPE FOR THE WORLD

On a personal note, Christmas always reminds me of the humble birth of Jesus Christ in a manger, possibly the most powerful symbol of hope in the history of the world. From the world of literature, I recall the voice of my hero, Charles Dickens, in the ‘Christmas Carol’, telling me that rich people, no matter how miserly or cruel, can turn benevolent when their hearts are touched. Case in point – Scrooge, the hard-hearted skinflint, adopted the crippled boy Tim and became a generous employer to Tim's father.

On a national and global level, I hope that mankind, especially the rich and powerful, will rise above their worldly preoccupations. May we all channel the spirit of Christmas and share our good fortune with the poor and the dispossessed, wherever they may be. ■

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.

I Can't Sleep

As we age, a good night's sleep can elude us. Geriatrician Dr Chan Kin Ming of Chan KM Geriatric & Medical Clinic, Mount Alvernia Hospital, explains why older folks find it hard to sleep and what they can do to change it.

SLEEP REQUIREMENTS THROUGH THE YEARS

As people age, most older people find that they have a harder time falling asleep, and wake up more frequently and earlier in the morning.

Regardless of age, sleep requirements vary from person to person, and are genetically determined, shared Dr Chan. Apparently, some people are fine with just a few hours of sleep every night, while others need a lot more.

Though we tend to need less sleep as we grow older, sometimes by up to 1 to 1.5 hours less, there is no magic formula to determine the ideal number of hours of sleep for an elderly person. "It depends on how much sleep they needed when they were younger. If they needed very little sleep previously, I will use that as a gauge of the number of hours of sleep they need now," said Dr Chan.

BOTH QUALITY AND QUANTITY COUNT

Dr Chan also takes into account how his patients feel when they wake up in the morning. If they still feel very tired and sleepy, then they have probably had inadequate sleep and should try to sleep for a longer duration. Aside from duration, the quality of sleep is also important. Those who have enjoyed a deeper sleep (so-called Stage 3 and 4 stages) will feel fresher than those who have had a less deep sleep (so-called Stage 1 and 2). Stage 3 and 4 stages of sleep are more restorative to the body.

SLEEPLESS IN SINGAPORE

There are many causes of sleeplessness among the elderly. Common ones include:

1. Environmental conditions – unfamiliar environment, level of brightness, uncomfortable room temperature, noise, etc.
2. Medical conditions – arthritis causing pain, heart and chest conditions that cause breathlessness (like heart failure and bronchitis), stroke, depression, Parkinson's disease, dementia, etc.
3. Medication use – like aminophylline, Ventolin, cafergot, diuretics, certain blood pressure medicine, steroids, etc.

4. Exposure to or consumption of stimulants – like coffee, tea, alcohol, nicotine, etc.
5. Sleep apnoea
6. Periodic limb movements during sleep, including restless leg syndrome and nocturnal leg cramps

It is important that family members of elderly citizens pay special attention to these issues and address them. After all, quality sleep allows the body to repair cell damage and revitalises the immune system. The latter is especially crucial for the elderly, whose bodies are not as strong as they once were in fighting debilitating illnesses.

HEALTHY SLEEPING HABITS

How then can the elderly combat the plague of sleep issues that puts their bodies at risk? The best solution is, of course, to cultivate healthy sleeping habits. Dr Chan urges his patients to:

1. Maintain a regular bedtime and rising time.
2. Keep active during the day and avoid napping. If there is a need to nap, make sure it is confined to no longer than an hour.
3. Exercise regularly and have exposure to the sun during the day. This will help you sleep better at night.
4. Practise good sleep hygiene – i.e. the bed is meant for sleeping, so do not read, work or watch TV while in bed. If you are still unable to fall asleep after 30 minutes of lying in bed, get out of bed and perform some soothing activity like listening to music or light reading until you feel tired and sleepy again, then go back to bed.
5. Relax mentally before bedtime.
6. Avoid taking heavy meals before bedtime
7. Limit alcohol, coffee and nicotine before bedtime.

All that remains to be said is – sweet dreams! 🌙



Dr Chan Kin Ming, Geriatrician
Chan KM Geriatric & Medical Clinic Pte Ltd
Medical Centre D #08-55



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Help with Caring for the Elderly at Home

The vast majority of Singaporeans would prefer to grow old in their homes. The increasing availability of part-time caregiving helps them do just that.

YOU NEED OUTSIDE HELP WHEN...

Caring for an elderly family member is not an easy job. Family caregivers face a host of challenges, often having to juggle their family, the elderly family member and full-time work. Other caregivers struggle to deal with the emotions of an elderly parent who is fighting against losing their independence. Many simply lack the specialised knowledge to care for an elderly person with minor or multiple health conditions.

In Asian society, many overloaded caregivers resist putting their hand up for help. Traditional expectations of filial piety can weigh heavily on their conscience and prompt them to persist in caregiving when it is clearly beyond them. Though it is easier said than done, these feelings should be set aside and the focus shifted to the ultimate wellbeing of the elderly family member.

If you are a caregiver, here are four signs that you may need help caring for your elderly:

- you feel overwhelmed and emotional almost all of the time
- your performance in the workplace is compromised
- your children are misbehaving, possibly due to a lack of parental attention
- you constantly worry that your elderly family member is not receiving the care that they need

If you nodded knowingly as you read any or all of the above signs, perhaps you should consider professional caregiving to ease your load.



IN THE BUSINESS OF HELPING

A growing number of professional organisations are offering elderly Singaporeans and their families the option of part-time caregiving by trained professional nurses, therapists and caregivers. This can greatly ease the workload of the family caregiver or caregivers, as well as provide extra care as the needs of the elderly family member increase with age.

Among the most popular services provided by caregiving organisations is physiotherapy. Given that the most common conditions among the elderly are heart disease, stroke, arthritis, osteoporosis and respiratory disease, all of which affect mobility, this is not surprising.

Mobility is inextricably tied to independence, and positively impacts many other areas of health and fitness. An investment in home visits by a physiotherapist could be a very good investment in a healthy old age for your elderly loved one.



MATCHING THE CAREGIVER TO THE CLIENT

A spokesperson for CaregiverAsia, an online aggregator of health and caregiving services, explained the careful process by which a caregiver is matched with a client.

“Ease of communication with the elderly, such as speaking the same dialect, is also an important factor. And last but not least, budget is always taken into consideration.”

“The key considerations when booking a caregiver for an elderly are based on the caregiver's experience in meeting the specific requirements of the client, be they lifting patients, assisted walks or simply light household chores,” said a spokesperson for CaregiverAsia. “Ease of communication with the elderly, such as speaking the same dialect, is also an important factor. And last but not least, budget is always taken into consideration.”



At the end of the day, when the family caregiver is getting the support they need, their elderly loved one is getting the care they need. It sounds like the perfect arrangement. ■

To enjoy a discount on booking fees, please quote promo code 'MTALV40' when engaging the services of CaregiverAsia by phone.

Singaporeans Are Second in the World for Healthy Life Expectancy

The latest World Health Statistics report by the World Health Organisation (WHO), published on 17 May 2017, ranked Singapore third in the world for average life expectancy, behind Japan and Switzerland.

The average life expectancy in Singapore was 83.1 years, compared to 83.7 years for Japan, and 83.4 years for Switzerland.

The WHO report also examined healthy life expectancy, which refers to the number of years people live in full health. According to the report, Singapore was second in the world in this category at 73.9 years, behind Japan at 74.9 years and ahead of South Korea at 73.2 years.

<https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/singapore-3rd-world-life-expectancy-who-report>

Written in collaboration with CaregiverAsia

Sources:
<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/8-in-10-singaporeans-worry-about-growing-old-survey>

<https://www.fivegoodfriends.com.au/4-signs-need-help-caring-ageing-loved-ones/>

Listen to Your Heart

Heart disease can be stealthy and swift. Find out about a real-life patient's shock diagnosis, surgery and recovery.



THE UNLIKELIEST VICTIM

Mdm Tan Bee Hua, a 71-year-old housewife, is a lively and active person who believed that she was healthy. For the past ten years, she has woken up at 5.30am every morning and gone to a nearby park to exercise at 6am. She has always paid attention to her diet and never had any bad habits.

“The doctor told me that all three coronary arteries were blocked. I couldn’t believe it. I could walk, I don’t pant, and I have no difficulty breathing. How could I have heart disease?”

A year ago, Mdm Tan started feeling overwhelmingly tired due to the constant pain in her right leg. She went to Mount Alvernia Hospital for a checkup and was shocked to discover that she had severe blockages in all three of her coronary arteries. Immediately, she was admitted to the hospital to undergo coronary angioplasty

DISBELIEF TURNS TO GRATITUDE

“The doctor told me that all three coronary arteries were blocked. I couldn’t believe it. I could walk, I don’t pant, and I have no difficulty breathing. How could I have heart disease?” said Mdm Tan, recalling her incredulity after the diagnosis. “I even asked Dr Ho to perform the surgery only after my trip to Thailand.”

It was not until her doctor, Dr Ho Kheng Thye, Senior Consultant Cardiologist of Heart Consultants Pte Ltd at Mount Alvernia Hospital, showed the heart scan to both she and her daughter that Mdm Tan appreciated the full gravity of her condition. Shaken, she cancelled her trip and underwent the procedure right away.

DON’T AUTOMATICALLY PIN THE BLAME ON ‘OLD AGE’

Before the angioplasty, Mdm Tan said that she felt tired all day long. She had no energy even to carry groceries from the wet market, and nodded off as soon as she sat down. Mdm Tan had felt moderately fatigued for several years, but it began to worsen last year. The muscles in her right leg became so painful that it was difficult to even climb up the stairs. She would have to stop and rest after taking a few steps, and would fall asleep quickly even on a short bus ride.

Since Mdm Tan’s parents and siblings had no family history of cardiovascular disease, she put her lack of energy to getting old. Never once did it occur to her that she might have a heart problem.

FAST-FORWARD TO TODAY

After her coronary angioplasty, Mdm Tan was able to care for herself immediately upon being discharged from hospital. The surgery has had no ill-effects. While she made a quick recovery, she had a second angioplasty procedure performed two months later. With this, all three vessels were successfully treated. She now goes exercising or swimming everyday and is brimming with energy. She regularly socialises and walks long distances without feeling tired.



Many of Mdm Tan's close friends were as shocked as she was when they learned that she had a life-threatening heart condition.

Several were jolted out of their complacency and started going for regular health checkups. Mdm Tan continues to share her experience with her elderly neighbours and friends, urging them to go for regular checkups so that problems can be diagnosed and treated early.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

As Mdm Tan discovered, heart disease is not necessarily accompanied by typical symptoms such as chest pain and tightness or difficulty breathing. Ironically, Mdm Tan's husband died of a heart attack in his sleep some ten years ago, without warning.

Had Mdm Tan not 'listened' to her chronic fatigue, and if she had only put that down to old age and put-off that checkup, she may not be around to tell her story today.

"Maintaining good health isn't just about happiness for ourselves, it is also a blessing for our children and family," shared Mdm Tan. "I hope to stay healthy and happy for the rest of my days." ■

CT Myocardial Perfusion Takes a Closer Look at the Heart

Mdm Tan's symptoms were not typical of coronary artery disease (CAD). She did not complain of chest pains or breathlessness, but overwhelming fatigue and low energy levels. In retrospect, this was all due to CAD.

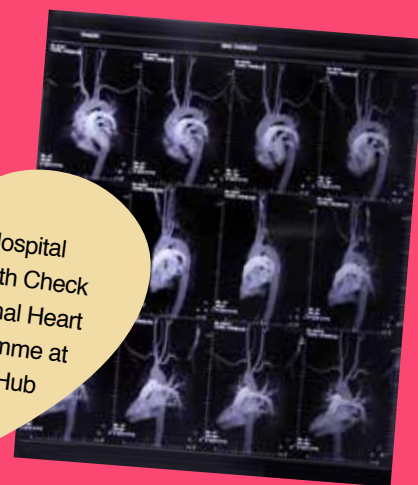
Since CAD is more common in the elderly, a CT coronary angiogram was performed. The results showed that the blood vessels were heavily covered in calcium which made it difficult to be sure if the vessels were blocked. Traditionally, the next test would have been an invasive angiogram. However, she was reluctant to undergo an invasive test.

The CT perfusion test showed a severe reduction in blood flow in a very large part of her heart. This implied that all three vessels must have been severely blocked.

When Dr Ho showed both Mdm Tan and her daughter the scan images, they were convinced immediately that she needed urgent treatment.

Most patients are probably familiar with a CT coronary angiogram (CTA) to examine the blood vessels of the heart. Adding CT Myocardial Perfusion to the imaging, doctors can get a lot more information pertaining to the blood vessels and blood flow which can be used to diagnose, plan for treatment, and predict whether an illness might occur. Perfusion refers to the blood flow to the heart. In Myocardial Perfusion testing, doctors measure the blood flow using the CT scan machine. They can then tell if the flow is normal or reduced when the patient has CAD.

Mount Alvernia Hospital
was the official Health Check
Partner at the National Heart
Week 2018 Programme at
Toa Payoh HDB Hub
Atrium 2018.



Using medications to dilate the vessels can create the same post-exercise effect without requiring physical stress and while the patient is resting on the scan table. If the flow is reduced, it indicates a significant block in the vessels. Patients can avoid going for more investigations and thus reducing further costs.

This was especially applicable in the case of Mdm Tan, where the arteries could not be clearly seen with CTA. This might happen in a situation when the vessels are heavily calcified or if the patient has had stenting procedures done before. Moreover, Mdm Tan was already feeling very fatigued, and it might not have been possible for her to perform an exercise test.



Dr Ho Kheng Thye
Senior Consultant Cardiologist
Heart Consultants Pte Ltd, Medical Centre D #06-55

Eat, Drink and Be Healthy!

While Christmas is a time of celebration, the festive season doesn't have to undo a year of healthy eating. Plan your food strategy and you can face the new year in good health and great shape.

Image courtesy of Cold Storage Singapore



EAT BEFORE YOU PARTY

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, you should never arrive at a party hungry. Make sure you've had a light snack or a filling drink beforehand. It will help to curb that impulse to gorge on anything and everything in sight.

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

If you analyse your own behaviour at a buffet groaning with food, you'll probably realise that you only really enjoy the first few mouthfuls – before your waistband starts to pinch and you are overcome with that somewhat sickening and physically uncomfortable feeling of regret for eating till your sides ache. Instead, go for a little of what you love, not a lot of everything on offer.

AVOID THE SNACK TRAPS

The bane of health-conscious eaters at parties is the multitude of fattening snacks everywhere in sight. Traditionally, they tend to veer towards high-fat, trans-fat and unhealthy. If you're a guest, go for the vegetable sticks and hummus or baked corn chips and salsa over the potato chips and cream cheese-based dips.

BE A HEALTH-CONSCIOUS HOST

If you're the host, don't sabotage your guests' fitness goals by plying them with fattening snacks. Or at the very least, make sure there are healthy options. While our parents' generation may have had limited choices in the snacks section of their local supermarket, we are spoilt for healthy choices today.

THE MAIN EVENT

The main event, Christmas lunch or dinner, is a once-a-year occasion and like many you may feel compelled to honour tradition and serve a big bird. Roast turkey and chicken are both good sources of high-quality protein and less fattening than roast duck. White meat is the leanest choice, but dark meat is acceptable if you skip the skin.

If you're the host, don't sabotage your guests' fitness goals by plying them with fattening snacks.

The real fat traps are the trimmings. Why not offer healthy roast veggies and side salads? Alongside gravy, you could also offer a fresh fruit salsa.

Then comes dessert. Portion control is of paramount importance here. Just a taste will satisfy after a heavy main course. Fresh fruit, especially those pretty little edible baubles called berries, is always a welcome choice. ■



Switch Up Your Christmas Menu

If you're cooking this Christmas, instead of fatty pork and duck, why not opt for an equally premium but more health-conscious choice such as salmon? Brimming with omega-3 fatty acids, it's an ideal heart-healthy main. Likewise, out of respect for teetotalers and the lactose-intolerant, consider offering your guests a non-alcoholic, dairy-free drink. Here are two delicious recipes submitted by Melanie Khoo, who interned at Mount Alvernia Hospital earlier this year.



Salmon Salad (Serves 4)



Ingredients

- 280g salmon, raw, thinly sliced (or 2 cups cooked, flaked salmon)
- 2 hard boiled eggs, diced
- ¼ cucumber, diced
- 2 cups mixed lettuce (romaine, iceberg, butterhead, etc.)
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ carrot julienned (optional)
- ½ cup edamame or snow peas (optional)
- 1 avocado sliced (optional)
- 1 red or green bell pepper, diced (optional)

Dressing

- 3 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
- 1-2 tbsp sesame oil (or olive oil)
- 2 tbsp Japanese mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 ½ tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp mirin

Method

1. Place sesame seeds in mortar and grind finely
2. Place ground sesame seeds in large bowl and whisk in dressing ingredients
3. Mix all salad ingredients together evenly in another large bowl before placing salmon and avocado on top
4. Dress the salad with preferred amount of sesame dressing



A.B.B.A. Smoothie

(Serves 2)

Ingredients

- ½ cup almond milk
- 1 cup spinach
- 1 medium ripe banana, peeled
- ½ ripe avocado, peeled and pitted
- 2 cups frozen blueberries
- 1 tbsp almond butter (or whole almonds)
- 1 tbsp soaked chia seeds
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground flaxseed meal (optional)

Method

1. Place all ingredients in the blender in this order: almond milk, spinach, banana, avocado, blueberries, flaxseed meal, chia seeds and almond butter
2. Blend to a smooth consistency
3. For a thicker smoothie, add a handful of ice (optional)

Shop Mindfully

The snacks sections in supermarkets are no longer confined to chips and peanuts. Here's a sampler of some of the healthy food and beverage alternatives available, courtesy of Cold Storage Singapore.



Saffron Road
Baked Lentil Chips, Chipotle
Baked not fried



Welch's Multi Grain
Fruit Puffs, Mixed Berry
Gluten-free and naturally sweet



Enlightened Ice Cream,
Black Cherry Chocolate Chip
Only 90 calories per serve



Mojo Crafted Kombucha
Strawberry Hibiscus and Passionfruit
Probiotic-dense and low-sugar

Food and Mood

You feel what you eat.
Here's why.

COMFORT FOOD, A MISNOMER

It's ironic how many of us will turn to ice cream, cakes, bread, pasta and potato chips when we're feeling stressed. But instead of eating yourself happy, you are probably feeding your stress.

After eating simple carbs, there is a sudden spike in the body's sugar levels that results in a burst of energy. Then when that sugar spike drops, your energy levels will slump. That means less energy to focus on the source of stress at hand. Chances are, the problem will worsen unless they are addressed and resolved... and the vicious cycle of comfort eating continues.

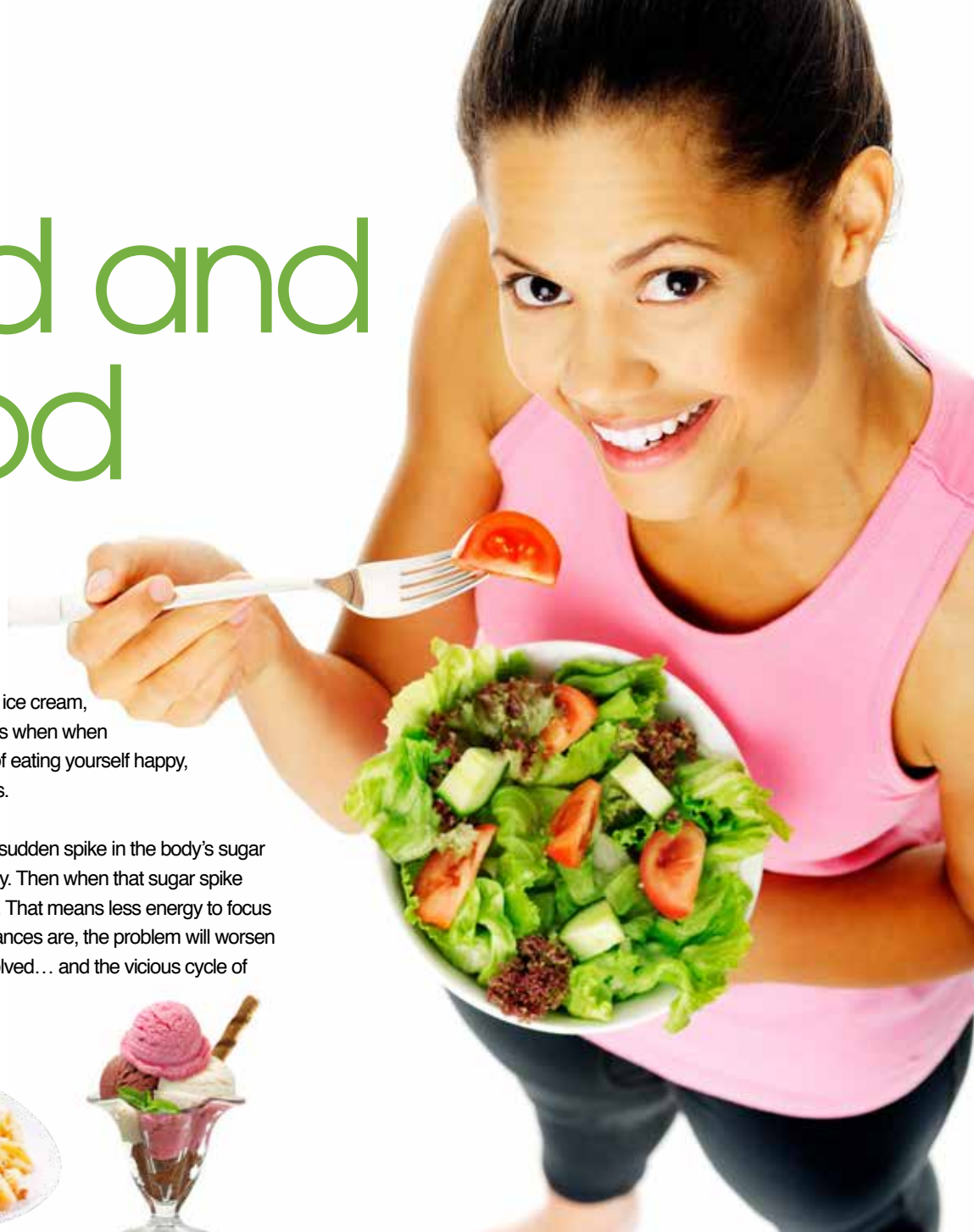


HAPPY AND HEALTHY MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Studies consistently show that there is a link between the Mediterranean diet and a lower risk of depression. A Mediterranean diet is widely regarded as a model of healthy eating. It is rich in fruits, vegetables, olive oil, whole grains and lean protein such as chicken and fish, and low in red meat and unhealthy fats.

The wider the variety of fruits and vegetables consumed, the greater the positive impact on your mood.

Scientific evidence supports the link between the Mediterranean diet and positive mental health outcomes. A healthy diet lowers the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, which in turn will logically lower the risk of depression related to deteriorating health and loss of independence.



EAT CALM AND CARRY ON

One study on the association between mood and diet quality showed that subjects who consumed more water, fibre, ascorbic acid, tryptophan (an essential amino acid) and other key minerals such as magnesium and selenium experienced better moods overall. From this, we can deduce that eating more whole grains, dark leafy vegetables, tofu, fish, chicken, avocado, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds will improve our mood. The same study suggested that the wider the variety of fruits and vegetables consumed, the greater the positive impact on your mood.

Dare we say – eat a rainbow of fruit and vegetables and your mood will be sunnier! 🌈

Sources:
<https://www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/1007/stressed-stay-away-from-junk-food>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/food-and-mood-is-there-a-connection>

Know Your Kopi

In the Pink
Know Your Kopi/
Understanding Food Labels

We Singaporeans love our kopi – but not all kopi is created equal in terms of its sugar and fat content. Tan Shiling, Senior Dietitian, Nutrition and Dietetics Department, Mount Alvernia Hospital, decodes the contents of your cuppa.

Types of Coffee	Description	Sugar	Fat
Kopi	Black coffee with condensed milk	✓✓	✓✓
Kopi Peng	Sweet black coffee with condensed milk and ice	✓✓	✓✓
Kopi-O Siew Dai	Black coffee with less sugar	✓	
Kopi-O	Sweet black coffee	✓✓	
Kopi-O Kosong	Unsweetened black coffee	-	-
Kopi-O Kosong Peng	Unsweetened black coffee with ice	-	-
Kopi-O Peng	Sweet black coffee with ice	✓✓	
Kopi Gah Dai	Black coffee with extra condensed milk	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Kopi Po	A weaker coffee with condensed milk (not so intense in flavour)	✓✓	✓
Kopi Gau	Strong coffee with condensed milk (also higher in caffeine)	✓✓	✓✓
Kopi-C	Coffee with evaporated milk and sugar (the C is for 'Carnation')	✓✓	✓
Kopi-C Kosong	Coffee with evaporated milk and no sugar		✓

Best Kopi
Kopi-O
Kosong

Drink kopi in moderation.
Limit your kopi intake to 2 cups a day.

Go green

– for a healthy alternative to kopi, try unsweetened green tea.

Worst Kopi
Kopi Gah Dai
(coffee with extra condensed milk)

- ✓ refers to the coffee containing less sugar and/or fat.
- ✓✓ refers to the coffee containing sugar and/or fat.
- ✓✓✓ refers to the coffee containing higher sugar and/or fat.

Understanding Food Labels



A HEALTHY HABIT

It's often said that we 'eat with our eyes', gravitating to food that looks visually appetising. However, we should also 'buy with our eyes' by studying food labels, says Tan Shiling, Senior Dietitian, Nutrition and Dietetics Department, Mount Alvernia Hospital. Here's how reading and understanding food labels can help you follow a healthy eating plan.

OPTIMISE YOUR DAILY NUTRITION

Food labels provide a quick breakdown on what nutrients are available per serve. Using them correctly can help ensure that you optimise your daily healthy intake.

CHECK YOUR SUGAR INTAKE

By law, ingredients are listed in descending order. For example, if the first ingredient is sugar then this product contains mainly sugar so it is not a healthy choice.

KNOW THE NUTRITIONAL VALUE

The nutrition information panel offers a quick summary of the nutritional breakdown of the food item in terms of total calories, fat, protein and carbohydrate. Your diet should consist of 50 percent carbohydrates, 30 percent fat and 20 percent protein.

AVOID ALLERGENS

Reading the ingredient list can ensure that you avoid food allergens such as nuts and eggs.

KEEP CALORIES IN MIND

Serving size refers to the average portion for a person on a 2,000 kJals-per-day diet. If the package weighs 1,000g but the serve size is 250g, then you should consume 250g per person.

GO FOR THE GOOD STUFF

Seek out food that lists wholegrains, monounsaturated and/or polyunsaturated fat, fibre and probiotics.



The Secret to Living Longer May Be Your Social Life

NO MAN OR WOMAN IS AN ISLAND

While the environment we live in and the lifestyle we lead are all known to affect life expectancy, less is said about the impact of social life. Besides clean air, financial security and healthy habits such as a balanced diet and regular exercise, it seems that we all need a healthy dose of social interaction. Virtual friends on social media excluded, belonging to a community in which relationships connect us face to face with people has a direct impact on longevity.

RISKY BEING LONELY

Clearly, living alone increases the likelihood of forgetting to take your medication, sleeping in when you should be taking a walk, skipping meals because you have no appetite or simply can't be bothered to cook for one. These are tangible ways that social isolation can be bad for one's health.

However, it seems that there are other factors at work. Many lonely older people display symptoms related to higher levels of stress hormones and inflammation. This seems to have a knock-on effect that raises the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and even suicide attempts.

COME TOGETHER!

Humans are naturally sociable. By 2030, one in four Singaporeans will be aged 65 and above. Moreover, our family sizes are shrinking. Hence, the importance of maintaining friendships and forming new ones will only grow as our population ages.

Remember – it's not just the years in your life, but the life in your years. The good news is, the fuller a life is, the longer it is likely to be.

Sources:
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