

HEALTH SHOTS

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06

Age is not just a Number

Choosing to wait until your 30s to have your first child? Here are some things you need to know.

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Waiting Beyond 40 Weeks

How long can a woman wait to deliver naturally? After the 40th week of pregnancy, should we look at inducing labour?



LAUNCHING SOON

GENTLE BIRTH METHOD - The Gowri Way

BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd. brings to you the 'Gentle Birth Method - The Gowri Way' programme, designed by Dr. Gowri Motha, a pioneering London-based obstetrician, who revolutionised childbirth.

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A large, stylized illustration in shades of pink and purple. It shows a woman's profile in silhouette, facing right. Inside her womb, a fetus is depicted in a curled position. The illustration is surrounded by several heart shapes of varying sizes and colors, and leaf patterns. The overall style is soft and nurturing.

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

I hope you have had a wonderful start to 2025!

It is mind-blowing when we look back and see that we have covered a quarter of a new century! It seems like just yesterday that we were all worried about 'Y2K' (younger readers might have to Google this term!).

If you are from the time that understands what 'Y2K' means, I am sure you might have come across and related to many nostalgic posts that talk about the 'simpler times' of the '80s and '90s, when mobile phones were not part of daily life. Over the past two-and-a-half decades, we have seen rapid development in all sectors, particularly technology. Today, almost everyone has a mobile phone, and there are apps for practically everything.

The impact of technology is felt strongly in the medical sector. On the one hand, it has created a massive forum for people to read, listen and learn about topics they might not have known about earlier - thereby making them more knowledgeable. On the other hand, there

are pockets of incomplete information, which could lead people to draw conclusions that may not serve them well. Sometimes, this can lead to self-diagnosis and (possibly) self-medication - both of which can have unwanted, sometimes even dangerous, outcomes.

Technology is here to stay - and it is going to get more and more advanced by the day. The one thing we can do for ourselves is to absorb the information we get but also keep an open mind to the fact that it may not be complete or even fully relevant to us. WhatsApp messages may contain information from experts, but whether it applies to you is something only an experienced doctor can confirm.

So, when in doubt, particularly when it comes to your health, please seek a doctor's advice without delay. All other new year resolutions apart, this is one thing that will keep you on the right track when it comes to doing the best for your health. ♦

Dr. Kavitha Gautham

Managing Director, BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

We want to hear from you! Please keep sending your feedback, suggestions and questions to info@bloomhealthcare.in.

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Can My Child Outgrow a Food Allergy?



Dr. D. Balakumaran

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Food allergies can range in severity and time span – and it does not result in the same experience for all children. In this article, we look into what allergies are and how they can be managed.

The moment the word ‘allergy’* is mentioned, parents become anxious. Those who have been facing some food-related allergies of their own tend to worry that their child is going to be deprived of some food items for life. So, when we diagnose that a baby or child is allergic to some food items, parents are anxious to know, ‘When and how will my child become allergy free?’.

Understanding Allergies

A food allergy refers to a reaction by the body’s immune system to a specific food item. (This is different from food intolerance, wherein eating a specific food may lead to a digestive disorder.) Allergies are like a spectrum - the reactions vary in intensity, and in terms of the time span of how long a person will remain allergic.

Food allergies are not rare or uncommon. Statistics show that 1 in 13 children one child are allergic to one food or the other, with most common allergens being nuts, products that have gluten or dairy,

fruits or preservatives used in packaged foods. However, in many cases, people may not be aware of what the exact allergen is. In such cases, there are blood investigations/ skin prick tests available to determine the allergen

One of the first things we look into after a child has been diagnosed as being allergic, is whether the child is mildly or severely allergic. Mild allergies may result in a mellow rash or short episodes of vomiting. Severe allergies can result in widespread and severe rashes, swelling edema or even cardiovascular shock.

Handling Allergies

If a child is diagnosed as being severely allergic to some food item, it is best to avoid that food and look for safe alternatives. The good news is that we have a wide variety of alternatives for almost kinds of foods, so the nutritional aspect and taste quotient can be addressed easily.

When it comes to mild allergies, studies show that a majority of the children tend to outgrow them between 4 and 16 years of age. In the interim, you can try giving them micro-doses (extremely tiny portions) of the food that they are allergic to. This process is known as micro-sensitisation, and helps the child’s immune system to start accepting the food slowly. In the long run, the child will outgrow the allergy. Certain micro-allergens can also be treated with a small dosage of antihistamines under the guidance of pediatrician.

A couple more things to bear in mind: If a parent is allergic to some food item, it doesn’t automatically mean that the child will be allergic to the same things. Also, there are no ‘allergy causing foods’ per se. So, offer all foods to your child and encourage them to try our new things. Then, based on their reaction and preferences, you can streamline the foods included in their diet. And consult your paediatrician when in doubt - this way, you will cover all bases! ♦

**Allergies are of several forms, with most of them primarily centred on food and environment. For the purpose of this article, we are focusing on food-related allergies.*





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AGE is not just a NUMBER

Call it old-fashioned, but there is deep-seated medical wisdom as to why childbearing in the 20s was once a norm. With more women choosing to wait till their 30s to have their first child, it is imperative that we understand the risks associated with childbearing post the age of 30, so as to make an informed decision.

In the Indian context, planning for conception soon after marriage is an established cultural thought. Many societies prioritise early formation of a family to align with mutual understanding, upbringing and time-bound responsibility. However, the scenario is changing with both delayed marriages and delay in planning pregnancies. Many couples now have their first child later in life, when compared with previous generations. The advice to “not delay pregnancy”, considered personally intrusive to a couple’s reproductive choice, is often met with resistance. However, the advice is not entirely flawed. The process of conception and childbearing is physiological but with its own timeline. It is therefore important for people to be time-bound in their decision, to maximise the probability of conceiving with minimal or no intervention.

Currently, a sizeable population of women are choosing to wait until their 30s to start a family. Majority do so, to support career growth, financial stability and gain social maturity to handle a family unit. However, women are considered most fertile in their early 20s to early 30s. So, what changes do we expect beyond 30 years that we should be concerned about when it comes to our ability to conceive naturally and see the pregnancy to completion? Let's dive in!

Age and Ovarian Reserve

Women are born with a certain number of eggs in their ovaries. This is referred to as the 'ovarian reserve'. The ovaries remain dormant until puberty, after which the gonadal axis gets activated to release ova (eggs) from the ovary at the rate of one egg per month. Unlike men, where the process of sperm production continues over many decades, women only deplete their eggs that have already been created. So, the process of natural depletion starts with puberty and ends with menopause.

Both the quantity and the quality of eggs decline with advancing age. Many patients encounter the diagnosis of 'diminished ovarian reserve' during their consult, which basically indicates their falling reproductive potential based on the reduced number of eggs available in the ovaries. The decline starts predominately after 30 years of age, accelerates as they reach their mid-30s and reaches a trough by 40 to 45 years.

A woman's ability to get pregnant naturally will substantially decrease by age 45. Although there is no surrogate marker for the quality of eggs, many older women tend to have eggs with inherent chromosomal defects leading to frequent miscarriages as compared to their younger counterparts. This dynamic yet natural phenomenon is highly consequential in affecting a woman's shot at conception with advancing age.

Chances of Natural Conception

Women in their early 30s with good reproductive health and a partner with normal semen parameters have a 20% chance of pregnancy each month as opposed to 25% for women in their 20s. With time, however, the success rate drops with rates reaching 5% and less per month at 40 years. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) estimates that at the age of 30, the risk of miscarriage is 1 in 5, and increases to 1 in 2 after the age of 40. The risk of miscarriage was observed to be lowest in females in their late 20s.

Women in their mid- to late 30s also have a higher risk of developing gynaecological conditions like uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts or endometriosis, which might hamper fertility prospects. Also, the greater likelihood of developing pregnancy complications like chromosomal abnormalities (especially Down's syndrome), high blood pressure (preeclampsia), diabetes, pre-term delivery and foetal growth restriction warrants a genuine consideration on the couple's part to plan pregnancies earlier.

As doctors, we are privy to a changing scenario where more women with advanced age seek fertility services due to delayed or failed natural conception. For such women, the scope and success of fertility treatment is directly tied to their ovarian health, which is only going to worsen with age. So, planning a family early will undoubtedly help couples achieve a conception with no/minimal intervention and ensure a physiological approach to parenthood. ♦



Why Diets Fail

Shweta R.

Clinical Dietitian
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Weight loss is not a million-dollar industry for no reason! Particularly when it comes to diets, we are often taken in by quick fixes that promise instant results. While diets might work temporarily, they don't address the root of the problem. We look into why diets don't work, and what you should be focusing on instead.

Every year, we make similar resolutions: Shed weight, build muscles, fit into that one pair of jeans, reduce the HBA1C count, and so on... Oftentimes, the desire to achieve all this is pinned on diets that promise quick results. Unfortunately, these approaches rarely lead to sustainable success.

Why Diets Don't Work

Diets are Temporary: One of the most common questions I am asked is: "How long should I follow this for? A week? Two? Can I go back to my usual after that?" These questions highlight the core problem with our mindset - that diets are primarily defined by a timeline. This is why we often embark on diets with the hope of achieving quick results, like losing a few kilos before an event or fitting into that old pair of jeans. Here's the catch: These changes don't last. Once the 'D-I-E-T' period ends, the old habits creep back in and the weight returns (sometimes with a few extra pounds packed on). The truth is, health isn't something you achieve for some time - it is based on a set of consistent habits you cultivate for a lifetime.

Nutritional Deficiencies: Restricting calories or cutting out entire food groups during the dieting period can lead to nutrient deficiencies, slower metabolism, and even disordered eating patterns. The result? You will be left feeling frustrated, deprived - and, eventually, back where you started. Instead of limiting food options, focus on how to plan your meals well. Replace the concept of dieting with mindful eating - listen to your body for hunger and fullness cues, and enjoy meals without guilt.

Short-term Results: Let's say you are trying to lose 5 kilos in one week - and you even achieve it. Will you actually be able to maintain your lower weight consistently in the long run? Not really.



Dieting often triggers a scarcity mindset, due to certain foods being labelled as 'off-limits' - and may lead to cycles of deprivation, followed by binge-eating. There is also the psychological burden of guilt and shame that accompany these cycles of starvation and binge-eating. Over time, this erodes confidence and fosters an unhealthy relationship with food - definitely not a good foundation for improved health.

What Really Works

Lasting health requires more than a shortcut. Here are some simple, manageable habits you can incorporate in your daily routine - and watch how they add up to significant improvements over time.

Prioritise Breakfast: Breakfast is your way to start the day on a good note - make it work by fuelling your body with nutrient-rich foods like whole grains, fruits, nuts, and seeds. Skipping breakfast might seem like an easy way to cut calories, but it often backfires. By mid-morning, hunger takes over, leading to unplanned snacking and overeating later in the day.

Shift Your Focus: The key to success isn't in a diet but in creating a lifestyle you can sustain. Instead of asking how long you should follow healthy habits, aim to make them a permanent part of your routine. These changes don't mean you can't enjoy indulgent meals or have lazy days - it means finding a balance that works for you. When you shift your mindset from temporary fixes to lifelong health, your habits will transform your life!

Aim Small: Getting healthier is not about big, grand actions. It can be small changes - like adding one more serving of vegetables at every meal, trying to incorporate more movement into your day, drinking sufficient water and making an effort to sleep on time. True success lies not in perfection, but in progress and self-care. This year, ditch the diet and embrace a healthier, more holistic approach to well-being. ♦

Road to Wellness

Looking to prioritise your health and well-being this year? Here are some simple, achievable goals that will reap great rewards in the long run!



Dr. Aiswarya M. Nair

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BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

Each January, we stand at the start of a brand new year – a wonderful opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to make our life move in a direction we feel is best. This would mean working to include more of what we want, and letting go of things that are not suiting us anymore. Of course, we are not talking about just physical things, but also habits, attitudes and emotions.

A priority, I would say, should be our health. Whether you are looking to address a specific condition or seek improved health overall, committing to some practical practices can help us move in the right direction. From my experience, I have shared here some habits that, when cultivated over time, will contribute to a balanced and meaningful life.

Work Towards a Healthy BMI: The Body Mass Index or BMI is a commonly used tool to ascertain whether an individual's weight falls within a healthy range. This is not the only parameter, and it is definitely not worth obsessing over, but it can be a useful guide in terms of highlighting whether a person needs to reassess their lifestyle and diet. The important thing is to first consult your doctor on what a healthy weight range is for you, and then incorporating small, sustainable changes in eating habits and physical activity.

Create a Proper Sleep Schedule: We can't say this enough – sleep is essential for your body and mind to function optimally. Lack of sleep can lead to a weakened immune system, poor concentration, irritability, and even long-term health issues like heart disease and diabetes. Work towards a consistent sleep schedule on all days (including weekends), and consult your doctor if you face issues like prolonged insomnia or sleep apnea.

Cultivating Emotional Balance: Mental well-being is equally important as physical health. Chronic stress, anxiety, and negative emotions can have a detrimental effect on your body, leading to issues like high blood pressure, digestive problems, and even depression. Practising mindfulness, setting proper boundaries and working towards work-life balance can help to move you towards a more calm, balanced state of mind.

Make Way for Gratitude: Gratitude is a powerful practice that can improve both mental and physical health. Studies have shown that actively, regularly practicing gratitude can reduce stress, enhance your mood, and even boost the immune system. By focusing on what you have (rather than what you lack), you can cultivate a positive mindset that fosters happiness and well-being.

Let us focus on small, realistic changes, and work towards a healthier, happier way of life! ♦

Diagnosis Dilemmas

Anita Krishnaswamy
CEO, BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

The growing tendency on part of patients and caretakers to approach a super-specialist directly is giving rise to a new problem – the interference of the ‘Rashomon Effect’ in diagnosis.

Let me quote a case I came across recently.

A 40-year-old male IT professional suffered from occasional neck pain. When the episodes became more frequent and severe, and the pain radiated to his left shoulder and arm, the man and his wife Googled the symptoms and read that it could mean an imminent heart attack. So, they went to a cardiologist. However, the cardiologist’s tests proved inconclusive.

What followed was a run of visits to one super-specialist after another (cardiologist, orthopaedic surgeon, neurologist), a battery of tests and scans – and a slew of possible diagnoses, including heart issues, a tear in the shoulder tendons, or neuropathy due to diabetes. Finally, an MRI of the cervical spine revealed that it was a slipped disc in the neck bone.

Even as you read it, I am sure you must have empathised with the pain and frustration the poor man and his wife went through.



Symptoms and corresponding body parts are not always connected in a straight line. When it comes to a person's health, it is essential to understand that there are several factors that need to be taken into account – sometimes, beyond the immediate symptoms – when making a diagnosis.

What is of greater concern is that this issue of facing varied diagnoses from different specialists seems to be occurring with increasing frequency in the last decade.

The reason for this is two-fold: One, the rise in super-specialisations and near parallel decline in general and family physicians. Two, the ease of access to information from multiple sources, which leads patients and caretakers to first map symptoms to a possible condition, and then approach a super-specialist directly.

You might ask: *If I know what the problem is, doesn't it make sense to go to the super-specialist immediately? This will get me the needed solution much faster!*

Definitely – provided the mapping of the problem to the super-speciality is done correctly in the first place.

You see, symptoms and corresponding body parts are not always connected in a straight line. When it comes to a person's health, it is essential to understand that there are several factors that need to be taken into account – sometimes, beyond the immediate symptoms – when making a diagnosis.

Isolating the possible causes, then confirming it via tests and scans are critical steps in the process – and these are done first by a General Physician, after which they will recommend which super-specialist you should consult.

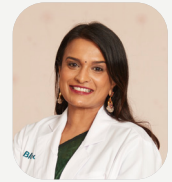
Skipping all this and going directly to a super-specialist may lead us down a circuitous route. While a super-specialist is extremely knowledgeable and experienced in his/her field, the bounds of their knowledge make it hard for them to see beyond their scope and correlate other indicators that may be telling an entirely different story. This is due to what is known as the 'Rashomon Effect', wherein a person's understanding of an issue is coloured by their personal

experience. In other words, every super-specialist sees the patient and his symptoms, only from the point of his/her own specialisation, and their clinical notes and investigations reflect their leanings.

Furthermore, when patients or caretakers read up and infer that the symptoms could be due to some specific issues, they might subconsciously filter out information when meeting the doctor, which in turn exacerbates the issue.

So, a takeaway for us as patients or caretakers is to refrain from drawing any conclusions, and approach a General / Family Physician for the first leg of diagnosis. Our parents and grandparents were sticklers in this regard – they would never take any medical decisions without a nod from their General / Family Physician. Let us take a leaf from their book and leave the decoding and diagnosis to the experts! ♦





Dr. Kavitha Gautham

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BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

Waiting Beyond 40 Weeks

As a woman approaches the end of her pregnancy term, one of the most common questions she may have is about waiting vs. inducing labour, particularly after the 40-week mark. We look into key considerations that affect this decision.

How long can a woman wait to deliver her baby naturally, without being induced? This is a question that many mothers-to-be ask, when they are preparing for a natural birth. In particular, if the mother does not seem to be going into labour naturally even after crossing 40 weeks of pregnancy, the question arises as to how long one can wait before choosing to induce labour.

According to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the recommendation is to wait until around 41 weeks for the woman to deliver the baby naturally. In some countries, waiting until 42 weeks for a natural birth is considered normal. However, there are some criteria that need to be taken into account when we go beyond 40 weeks and are waiting for the mother to deliver the baby.

Primary Risk Factors

Among the primary factors we look into, the fluid level and the baby's heartbeat and movement (which are measured by a nonstress test or NST) are critical. These tests will be carried out every other day or as per the doctor's advice. If both aspects are found to be within normal parameters, we can wait until 42 weeks.

Another important factor we take into account is the baby's size. Most Indian women (average height and build) can have a fairly comfortable natural delivery when the baby is around 3 kg. If the baby is heavier than 3.5 kg, unless the mother is naturally built with a wide pelvis, it can prove to be difficult in terms of birthing.

Waiting to deliver naturally beyond 42 weeks can entail several risks – and these should be understood well by the mother. Importantly, by this time, the placenta starts to mature, and the baby's supply of nutrients may be affected and the amniotic fluids may move away from ideal levels. As these risk factors can affect the mother and baby, induction of labour would have to be looked into on a priority basis.

Being Prepared

All of the above-mentioned factors, of course, vary from person to person, so there is no one, common course of action that we can prescribe. The best way to approach such a situation starts during pregnancy, when you chart your birth plan with your doctor – and keep an open mind to accommodating the best ways to have a safe, healthy pregnancy and delivery. ♦



PART - I

The Complete Health Insurance Checklist

Planning to sign up for health insurance? Read this first! We look into the main factors you should look into to ensure that the policy provides comprehensive protection and peace of mind during times of medical need.

Dr. Rija Prathab

Manager – Billing & Insurance, BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

When selecting a health insurance policy, it's essential to carefully assess the coverage it provides and ensure it aligns with your and your family's medical needs. A comprehensive, well-structured health insurance plan can help protect you and your family from significant financial strain in the event of illness or medical emergencies. This two-part article looks into the key conditions and aspects that should be covered to ensure that your health insurance policy offers full protection.

Hospitalisation and Treatment

One of the primary benefits of any health insurance policy is coverage for hospitalisation. This should include inpatient expenses (including room rent, doctor fees, and surgery costs during hospitalisation), pre- and post-hospitalisation expenses (incurred before and after a hospital stay, such as diagnostic tests, medication, and follow-up care), and day care treatments (for procedures don't require 24-hour hospitalisation but still come with medical expenses).

Critical Illness Coverage

Critical illnesses such as cancer, heart diseases, strokes, and organ failure can be life-threatening and expensive to treat. Confirm that your insurance covers diagnosis and treatment costs of critical illnesses. This can be a crucial aspect of your coverage, especially as these conditions often require extended treatment and specialist care.

Outpatient Services

While inpatient care is important, outpatient services are also crucial for routine health maintenance and minor ailments. Coverage should include doctor consultations (check-ups, consultations, and follow-ups), diagnostic tests and minor treatments (routine tests, vaccinations, and treatments that don't require hospitalisation).

Chronic and Pre-existing Conditions

Chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and asthma often require lifelong management. Ensure that your health



insurance policy includes coverage for these conditions and verify the waiting period for pre-existing conditions. Some policies may exclude coverage for certain conditions for a specific time after the policy starts.

Maternity and Newborn Care

If you are planning to have a baby, make sure your policy covers maternity expenses (costs related to pregnancy, labour, and delivery) and newborn care (including neonatal care and vaccinations).

Preventive Healthcare

Preventive measures can help identify potential health risks early on, minimising the chance of serious illness. Your plan should ideally cover annual health check-ups, vaccinations and screenings for conditions like cancer, diabetes, or cholesterol.

Emergency Services

Medical emergencies can arise at any time, so make sure your insurance includes ambulance charges for both road and air ambulance services, if necessary. ♦

(To be continued in the following issue.)

If you have any specific queries related to medical insurance aspects, write to us at info@bloomhealthcare.in

TRUST MATTERS

Legal Safeguards for Patient-Hospital Communications

To what extent can a hospital be held liable if a patient's records are leaked to a third party (without consent)? We look into the legal parameters that are to be taken into account for such issues.



Samuel Abraham

Legal Advisor
BloomLife Hospital Pvt. Ltd.

The legal relationship between a patient and a hospital comes under a contract of service wherein the hospital offers a service or services to the patient, and, in return, the patient pays consideration (i.e., money) to the hospital. During the course of this relationship, all communication between them falls under the Doctrine of Privity of Contract. The essence of this doctrine is that a third party is *dehors* (or stranger) to the activities and communications that are arising out of the contracting parties. Such communications are protected as privileged documents between them. If one party knowingly or unknowingly releases such records to a third party, it creates injury to the reputation of the other contracting party, and the affected party is entitled to file suit for compensation.

In India, in such cases, both criminal and civil cases could be filed against the offending party. The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023, provides for this in section 127 to 134. A loss of trust, breach of reputational damage, competitive disadvantage are a few of the consequences arising out of a leakage of medical records done through a hospital sources. Intentional leakage of a patient's personal details of treatment would almost always severely damage one's reputation, as it is seen essentially as a form of defamation or harassment, and considered unethical and potentially illegal.

Furthermore, the recently enacted The Digital Data Protection Act, 2023, protects all personal data with a few exclusions (such as legitimate use or with consent) the breach of which provisions are made for awarding huge penalties & damages.

It is important to bear in mind that the medical records of a patient belong to the hospital whereas all information thereon belong to the patient according to the settled law of India.

In light of the above, it is advised that:

- i. Any staff or personnel who are dealing with patient's medical records should never divulge any information to any third party under any circumstances.
- ii. The relevant personnel could furnish a copy of medical records to the patient's name and address only by RPAD (Registered Post with Acknowledgement Due)
- iii. The relevant personnel could furnish a copy of medical records of a deceased patient to the legal heir only, if written representation is received.
- iv. The relevant personnel could furnish medical records to the Police after receiving an official summon from them in writing and summon from a court of Law. ♦

If you have a question about general legal issues relating to the medical field that you would like more information about, write to us at info@bloomhealthcare.in - and we will answer it in this column.



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