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SEPTEMBER 2024

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A project of Childbirth and Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand



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BAMBI is a project of the Childbirth & Breastfeeding Foundation of Thailand (CBFT).

Mission Statement

The CBFT is a non-profit networking and resource center dedicated to ensuring the best possible start in life for our babies. We believe that this can best be achieved through:

- Encouraging the appropriate use of technology and medication for all births.
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- Providing information and training to health professionals involved in maternity care.
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SCAN TO REGISTER



Hello BAMBI families!

I hope you all had a great summer holiday and now that the big kids are back in school, you finally have some time to sit back, relax, and read the magazine.

My name is Aoi. I'm the new Me-Time coordinator, and I'm very interested in this month's theme of health and nutrition as I feel kids are healthier and happier when they are eating well—and it means they can play and sleep better as well. Of course this makes parenting so much easier too!

We came to Bangkok about two years ago and due to the weather changes and going to new schools, our kids got sick very regularly. So I reconsidered what we ate and began to cook and bake more, especially that vital fourth meal: the snack.

After school, my kids come home hungry and thirsty no matter what, so I take that as a great chance for them to consume a nutritious snack. This may be something easy like fruits or smoothies—usually made with yogurt, soy milk, Japanese amazake, and fruit, or when we have time we like to make mochi and crackers together.

Of course if our kids ate nutritious dinners every day, that would be great, but sometimes both children and parents are too tired by dinner time to stress over healthy foods. So them having already had healthy snacks enables me to relax and not get too serious at the dinner table.

In Japan, we have a mnemonic for cooking: “Ma-go-wa-ya-sa-shi-i”. It's a combination of a few traditional Japanese ingredients: Ma for mame—beans, Go for goma—sesame, Wa for wakame—seaweed, Ya for yasai—vegetables, Sa for sakana—fish, Shi for shitake—mushrooms, and I for imo—potatoes. Of course we eat out and use GrabFood too, but whenever I cook, this mnemonic pops into my head to remind me of the various foods and ingredients I can use. I hope this helps you to prepare healthier meals too!

Having said all of that, I think the most important thing is that parents enjoy their healthy snacks and meals because kids notice that and try to eat whatever their parents are enjoying.

This month BAMBI is back with many playgroups and events, so why not join us and maybe enjoy a meal with friends afterwards? It might not be a big event, but it will be another fun memory in Bangkok that the kids will remember filled with laughter and delight.

Stay healthy, energized, and have fun!

Aoi
BAMBI Me-Time coordinator



Aoi Nakazawa



OUR COVER KID

NAME

Kai

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

My parents are from Sydney, Australia.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN THAILAND?

I was born here in Bangkok 19 months ago!

FAVORITE PLACES TO GO AS A FAMILY IN THAILAND?

Hua Hin

WHAT'S ON YOUR THAI BUCKET LIST?

Chiang Mai or Khao Lak for Loy Krathong and Sukhothai to see the temples

WHAT DOES BAMBI MEAN TO YOU?

A supportive, informative, and fun community for expat families!



Sanam Raisa Rahman

At the beginning of term a few weeks ago, I looked at the lunch menu at my daughters' school and couldn't help wishing I was a student there. So many items to choose from, each one tastier than the last, and all nutritious and filling! But when I realized they'd only have 20 minutes for lunch, I wondered how much of the food on their plates would actually end up in their tummies. Twenty minutes is generally enough time to finish a meal, but given the amount of prompting, pleading, and screen-related coercion my kids sometimes need to finish, and pitted against the opportunity to play with their friends, I doubted they'd eat enough to sustain their focus and energy levels till the end of the school day.

Have you ever thought similar and told yourself, "Well, we'll just compensate later," but when later came, felt frustrated at dinner? You're all low on energy, the kids won't put their gadgets away, and broccoli has become the bane of everyone's existence. Have you ever promised your kids an extra serving of dessert as a reward for clearing their plates or repeatedly explained, in vain, why veggies are good for them so "please try another spoon"? If this is something you relate to, turn the page and start reading. We bring to you the top tips, stories, and ideas you need to "fuel healthy futures for your family".

First up we have a recipe for "Superpower Muffins" from Anelia Van Zyl. For a healthy bite after school or a pick-me-up as you complete your daily chores, these are a must-try. Next we have "Mini Master Chefs" by Natasha Duffin-Jones, where she explains why kids should be motivated to hone their cooking skills from early on. Chinyere Nwachukwu builds on this and shares how it can be done at home in "How to Get Your Kids into the Kitchen".

Through her family's reading experiences, Kelly Patten highlights how stories can have a powerful, positive impact on our relationship with food in "Food and Stories". If you'd like to experience the same joy around your kitchens and tables, check out the books "My First Reference Book About Food" and "Foods That Harm, Foods That Heal" reviewed by Angela Chen in Readers' Corner.

Going further into the nitty gritty of healthy eating, in "Nurturing Life: Nutrition During Pregnancy in Thailand", Keren Granit discusses where in Thailand you can find the key nutrients needed during pregnancy. For a summary of these nutrients, turn to Dr Tanisa Kwanbunbumpen's article "Nutrition for the Immune System and Child Growth". And while we're talking about healthy eating, if rice is a staple in your home just like it is in Jeannie Kim's, read what she has to say about cooking rice for little ones in "A Safe and Nutritious Approach to Cooking Rice".

Other content includes "Treatment and Prevention of Shingles" by Anelia Van Zyl, a reflection on her recent experience with the disease and her learnings from it; "Play With Me!" by Anna Zarchi, a reminder that the best work we put towards our children's mental well-being always comes from spending quality time with them; and "Now We are Four" by Joe Barker, a hilarious account of how the addition of a daughter brought on some surprising adjustments for the family.

When I picked them up after school that first day, both my daughters were in good spirits and excited to tell me about their day. One of them had beef sliders and the other, fried chicken and rice. I can only trust that they did and that they'd had enough, because at the end of the day, as a parent I can only provide, educate, demonstrate, and encourage them to make healthy choices. What they eat and how much of it is up to them.

This issue aims to empower you to make healthy food and nutrition choices for yourself and your families, and I hope the content we've presented is successful in doing so. I always say that the newborn to first birthday stage is the easiest we ever have with feeding kids, and after that we can only keep experimenting and trying recipes, strategies, and more until something finally clicks and our kids start making healthy food choices for themselves. From the entire magazine team, good luck with your family's food and nutrition journey, and we hope you have an amazing month ahead!

Sanam
Editor



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SUPERPOWER MUFFINS

This month, Anelia and Charlie show us how to bake quick and easy muffins that are not only tasty but also packed with vital vitamins and nutrients, ready to supercharge your day.

Hey kids! Did you know that bananas are nature's very own candy bars, wrapped in their own yellow wrapper? These cheerful fruits are not only packed with potassium but they also serve as a phone substitute for when the opportunity "calls"! They are humble but quick energy boosters and work as a snack or in a smoothie. Oats, another powerful ingredient, are secret superheroes, working their magic when we need it. They add fiber to our breakfasts or snacks and serve as the caped crusaders that fight off free radicals in our bodies. Bananas and oats together—now, that would be a serious superfood! This month we are baking the ultimate muffins that will turn you into a force to be reckoned with! They are easy and fun to make, and will turn your power into SUPERPOWER! Enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- ¼ cup honey or maple syrup
- 1 large egg
- ¼ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips or raisins (optional)

Equipment

- Air fryer
- Muffin liners
- Mixing bowls
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mixing spoon or spatula

Instructions

1. Preheat the air fryer to 160°C.
2. Place muffin liners in the air fryer basket.
3. Combine the dry ingredients—rolled oats, all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon—in a bowl.
4. Mix the wet ingredients—mashed bananas, honey or maple syrup, egg, Greek yogurt, and vanilla extract—in another bowl.
5. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients. Stir until combined, but don't overmix!
6. Add any optional extras, like mini chocolate chips or raisins, by gently folding in.
7. Spoon the batter into the muffin liners to about two-thirds full.



8. Cook the muffins at 160°C for 12–15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
9. Now let those muffins cool on a wire rack for a few minutes before enjoying. Be careful—they'll be hot!

Remember to always have an adult nearby to help with the air fryer and handling hot muffins.

Fun tips

- Add chopped nuts, seeds, or dried fruits for extra flavor and nutrition.
- Decorate the tops with a sprinkle of oats or a few extra chocolate chips before air frying.
- Share a batch with friends or family and have a healthy snack party!

Photo courtesy of the author.

About the Author

Anelia is a performing artist from South Africa. She has been living and working as a teacher in Thailand for ten years. She also writes educational children's books, makes music, and loves to spend time in the kitchen. Follow her adventures on IG @aneliavz.





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MINI MASTER CHEFS

Cooking is a skill that lasts a lifetime. Natasha tells us why we should encourage our kids to start practicing it from an early age.



About the Author

Natasha Duffin-Jones is a mother of two as well as an early years and primary teacher with a Master of Early Childhood degree. She is also a children's yoga teacher with her company, Story Time Yoga, specializing in teaching yoga with children's stories, developing literacy and emotional literacy. She also likes visiting different places in Bangkok with her children and documenting their adventures on her Instagram page @bangkokmamaandbaby.

W

When I thought of myself as a mother, before I had children, I envisaged myself teaching my children how to cook, enjoying preparing meals together, and enthusiastically selecting new recipes to try as a family. So far, the reality has been slightly more challenging! I love to cook, or rather I loved to cook before I was cooking for a toddler who finds my cooking positively “yucky”. So I’ve had to find the joy in cooking again for myself and learn to enjoy cooking with my two-year-old as well.

A taste of home

I grew up learning to cook by watching my parents prepare all of our meals. Growing up in rural England, nearly every meal we ate was prepared by my parents or grandparents as there was only one takeout restaurant in our village (fish and chips, of course—this was England, after all). As with many children, I loved certain meals that my mom prepared and there are my absolute favorites that I always request, even now, when I return home.

Living away from home, there’s a certain nostalgia about having foods from your home country. I clearly remember receiving my first cookbook as a young child, a baking book in fact, and I spent time slowly working my way through the different recipes and creating a range of different bakes. I was fortunate that my mother always encouraged me to cook and allowed me to hone my skills in the kitchen. As a result, both my brother and I are keen cooks and still routinely enjoy experimenting with food.

A taste of Thailand

Fast forward to living in Thailand now, and there are stark cultural differences to the slow country life in England. Firstly, in Bangkok almost any food you could ever desire can be ordered through your phone and delivered to your door in less than an hour, which certainly reduces the desire to cook! Secondly, I truly believe that Bangkok has one of the best local and international food scenes you could ever experience, so who would want to miss out



on that, especially as Bangkok restaurants are so welcoming of families too? Furthermore, many families have helpers who prepare the family meals instead of the parents. As a teacher in an international school, I observed that when the children role-played in the kitchen, they would mostly role-play restaurants rather than cooking in the kitchen in their homes!

Cooking with children

So if you do want to cook with your children, where do you start? I found that for me, identifying when I had the time and patience to cook without rushing and tolerate the inevitable mess really helped me to start cooking with my toddler. I also found that instead of planning to cook elaborate cakes or attempting

to cook a whole meal, I just stuck to getting her involved with small, simple tasks, such as cracking eggs or cutting up fruits and vegetables. Then, we slowly built things up from there. Now, she likes to look through recipe books and pick out things she wants us to make—mainly cookies and cakes, to be honest!

Getting started

For younger children who want to be involved in preparing food, I would really recommend getting some safety knives as well as a place where they can prepare food. This could be a learning tower so that they can reach the counter top, or a small table. Other than that, you should have all the things you need in your own kitchen to begin cooking together.



Another way to get the benefits of cooking without cooking a meal is to involve children in preparing sensory play items such as play dough or simple slime. There are lots of recipes online, and you do not need to worry as much about hygiene. Failing all of that, because cooking with children is not for everyone, there are lots of cooking classes for children available in Bangkok. We particularly like the Bumpy Daisy “Fun With Food” class, and then you don’t have to worry about the mess either!

Why is cooking with children so important?

Cooking in itself is clearly a life skill that we all need—even with Grab and Foodpanda so easily accessible! Children also learn so many other skills through cooking, including but not limited to:

- Literacy through looking at cookbooks and reading recipes
- Math by measuring and timing, as well as converting measurements and even fractions as they double and halve recipes
- Fine motor skills and hand-strength development, which are needed for writing
- Problem-solving as they have to do things in different ways
- Scientific inquiry as they learn about the way foods change as they are prepared and cooked
- Hygiene, such as correct handwashing and effective cleaning
- Creativity in changing and altering recipes to suit different styles and palates
- An artistic eye in making foods look appealing to themselves and others
- Knowledge of various foods and their properties

Keeping it simple

There are many simple ways to start cooking. I would start with easy things such as preparing smoothies, as it doesn’t matter how the fruit and vegetables are cut up, and you don’t need to be super accurate with measuring—and you get an instant smoothie! Simple smoothies can also be frozen and used as popsicles. Other simple ideas could be preparing salads or omelets, or making sandwiches and wraps with different fillings. This also gives children control of the ingredients and could lead to them exploring new foods.

When cooking isn’t an option

As well as making simple meals, children love getting involved in decorating or plating food. There are lots of great small companies

in Bangkok who make cookie decorating kits which are good fun, such as Dropdead Gingerbread and Sugar Rush Cookie Co.



Children just absolutely love to cook and prepare food because it makes them feel like they are a useful and important part of the family. This, in turn, boosts their self-esteem and sense of self. Keep it simple and make it fun, and you’ll have mini master chefs on your hands before you know it!

Photos courtesy of the author.

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FOOD AND STORIES

Kelly reflects on how food is represented in some of her family's favorite books and the many lessons it teaches them about eating, culture, and more.



Photo by Casper, Somia from Pexels

About the Author

Kelly is currently a stay-at-home mom who has lived in Bangkok for over seven years. She previously worked as a primary educator and literacy specialist. Kelly loves reading fiction books, listening to podcasts, and exploring Thailand with her family.



Last week my daughter turned six months old. Her half-birthday was marked by her first tooth and her journey into the world of food. Not that our meals were peaceful before, thanks to the three-year-old, but now they are filled with squishy pumpkin, sticky strawberries, and mushy peas covering the baby and the floor. As I reflected on this milestone, I thought about how ubiquitous food and eating are in our day-to-day lives. Will we order Thai or Indian food for dinner? Should I indulge in the pain au chocolat for breakfast today? Will my toddler love edamame again today or will she throw them all on the floor? Food is essential, and the language that surrounds it helps to shape our understanding of different cultures and identities.

Everything in moderation

“The Very Hungry Caterpillar” is one of those books we all know by heart, and it is often a child’s first exposure to fictional food and eating. The caterpillar munches his way through the apples and oranges, but when Saturday rolls around, he feasts on chocolate cake and lollipops and, of course, ends up with a stomach ache. At first glance, we might assume the message is no junk food! But how realistic is this? I personally love chocolate and sweets, so a more appropriate takeaway for our family is everything in moderation. I want my daughters to have a healthy relationship with food from the start, something I lacked growing up (thanks, Kate Moss). That big, fat caterpillar? He’s now a beautiful butterfly.

The value of tales

Folktales are stories that impart values, morals, and identity through rich oral traditions. “Stone Soup” is a famous folktale that can be found across more than twenty different cultures from Mexico to Sweden to China. In the story, a band of hungry travelers happens upon a village. The town shuns the outsiders and will not feed them, so the travelers



Photo by William Fortunato from Pexels

begin to make stone soup by placing a stone in a pot of water. The curious villagers approach and are told how wonderful the soup is, especially when they add a few carrots, a potato, a chicken, and so on. Soon there is a bubbling pot of savory soup for all to share.

For the youngest children, a simple and essential value comes through—share. Older children might explore themes of community collaboration, sharing resources, and generosity. The story even inspired health workers in Cambodia to create the Lucky Iron Fish, a small iron ingot placed in cooking pots to help combat anemia in pregnant women.

Books about food

Is your child a picky eater like mine? We did baby-led weaning and one hundred foods before one, only to end up with a toddler who loves beige food. Fortunately, we can always find a book that talks about our problems. I’d recommend picking up “The Night of the Veggie Monster” by George McClements. In the story, an incredibly dramatic toddler thinks he will become a wild monster if he eats a pea and then realizes it’s not so bad. Another classic story about trying different types of food is “Yoko” by Rosemary Wells. Yoko’s lunch box is full of her

favorite foods, but the kids at school think they’re gross. It’s a charming story that touches on celebrating cultural differences. I find this story quite compelling, even as an adult, especially considering the diverse gastronomy available to us in Bangkok!

Both of my parents love to cook, and I grew up learning the recipes that are special in our family. Cultural knowledge, food, and strong family bonds are often intertwined throughout the language of children’s books. Consider “Tomatoes for Neela” by Padma Lakshmi, a story about a mother and daughter bonding over their love of tomatoes and cooking family recipes passed down through generations. “Fry Bread” by Kevin Noble Maillard examines how family traditions build resilience within indigenous cultures and communities.

The language in children’s literature is powerful, and our children are often more perceptive than we realize. The language surrounding food can help us explore family traditions, cultural differences, and an appreciation for the pleasure of eating. The next time you visit Kinokuniya or the library, consider seeking out books about food to share with your family.



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NURTURING LIFE: NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY IN THAILAND

Good nutrition is always important, especially for pregnant mothers and their babies. Keren shares some expert advice on how to eat well and stay healthy during pregnancy in Thailand.

Photo by Vlada Karpovich from corelens

About the Author

Keren is a registered dietitian specializing in pediatrics, including transitions to solids, picky eating, and regulating eating patterns. I also focus on pregnancy, gestational diabetes, and weight loss. I firmly believe in evidence-based, personalized nutrition plans to achieve optimal health outcomes.





As a registered dietitian, I have had the privilege of guiding many expectant mothers through the beautiful journey of pregnancy. Living in Thailand presents unique opportunities and challenges when it comes to nutrition. The country's vibrant cuisine offers an abundance of fresh fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins, but navigating dietary choices in a new culture can sometimes be daunting. This article aims to provide mothers-to-be with practical tips for maintaining a balanced diet, emphasizing the importance of nutrition during pregnancy and the critical first 1,000 days of their child's life.

THE FIRST 1,000 DAYS: A FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

The concept of the first 1,000 days refers to the period from conception to a child's second birthday. This window of time is crucial for laying the foundation for lifelong health. Proper nutrition during these days can influence a child's brain development, immune system, and overall growth. As you embark on your pregnancy journey, focusing on a nutrient-rich diet can have profound effects on your baby's future health.

NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY: A DIVERSE DIET FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

Pregnancy increases your nutritional needs, and eating a variety of foods ensures that both you and your baby receive all the necessary nutrients. Here are some tips for incorporating a wide range of healthy foods into your diet while enjoying the flavors of Thailand.

Embrace local produce

Thailand is a treasure trove of fresh fruits and vegetables. By enjoying a rainbow of colors, you ensure a broad spectrum of vitamins and minerals. Local favorites like mangoes, rich in vitamins A and C, and papayas, an excellent source of folate and vitamin C, are readily available. Dragon fruit, packed with antioxidants and fiber, and leafy greens such as morning glory and bok choy provide essential nutrients that support your pregnancy.

Balance your plate

A balanced plate should include a variety of protein sources, such as fish, chicken, tofu, and legumes. Fish, especially fatty fish like salmon, provides omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for fetal brain

development. Whole grains, such as brown rice, quinoa, and whole grain noodles, offer sustained energy and important nutrients like B vitamins and fiber. Healthy fats, such as those found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, should also be part of your meals to support overall health.

Stay hydrated

The tropical climate in Thailand can increase your fluid needs, so drinking plenty of water is essential, although coconut water is also a delicious, natural, and electrolyte-rich option. However, it's crucial to be mindful of food safety and ensure all water and ice come from safe sources.

Smart snacking

Healthy snacks can help maintain your energy levels and manage pregnancy-related nausea. Fresh fruit such as mango slices or banana with a sprinkle of chia seeds; nuts and seeds like almonds, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds; and plain yogurt with a drizzle of honey and fresh berries are excellent choices.

Mind your micronutrients

Pregnancy demands higher amounts of certain vitamins and minerals. Iron is crucial and can be found in foods like lean meats, spinach, and lentils.

Pair iron-rich foods with vitamin C-rich options like bell peppers or citrus fruits to enhance absorption. Calcium, necessary for your baby's bone development, can be incorporated through dairy products, fortified plant milks, and tofu. Adequate exposure to sunlight helps with vitamin D levels, and vitamin D-fortified foods or supplements can be considered if necessary.

COMMON NUTRITIONAL CONCERNS AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

Nausea and morning sickness

Many women experience nausea during the first trimester. To manage this, try eating small, frequent meals throughout the day. Ginger tea or fresh cucumber slices can soothe an upset stomach, and staying hydrated by sipping water or electrolyte-rich beverages like coconut water can help alleviate symptoms.

Heartburn and indigestion

As your pregnancy progresses, you might experience heartburn. Avoiding trigger foods, such as spicy, fatty, and acidic foods, can help manage this discomfort. Eating

smaller, more frequent meals rather than large ones can be easier on your digestive system. Additionally, staying upright after meals can reduce heartburn.

The role of supplements

While a balanced diet is crucial, prenatal vitamins can help fill any nutritional gaps. Look for supplements that include essential nutrients such as folic acid, iron, calcium, vitamin D, and DHA—an omega-3 fatty acid important for brain development. Consult with your healthcare provider to determine the right supplement regimen for you.

Navigating Thai cuisine safely

Thai food is delicious and diverse, but it's essential to be cautious about food safety during pregnancy. While street food is tempting, opt for stalls with high turnover and freshly cooked items to minimize risk. Avoid raw seafood, undercooked meats, and unpasteurized dairy products.

Gestational diabetes

The diagnosis of gestational diabetes is crucial for both maternal and fetal health. Gestational

diabetes occurs when a woman develops high blood sugar levels during pregnancy. Early detection and management are vital to prevent complications. For the mother, unmanaged gestational diabetes can lead to high blood pressure, preeclampsia, and an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life. For the baby, it can result in excessive birth weight, preterm birth, and respiratory distress syndrome. Additionally, infants born to mothers with gestational diabetes have a higher risk of developing obesity and type 2 diabetes in the future.

Proper diagnosis allows for timely interventions through diet, exercise, and medication if necessary, helping to maintain healthy blood sugar levels and ensuring a safer pregnancy and delivery. Regular monitoring and medical guidance can significantly reduce the risks associated with gestational diabetes, promoting better health outcomes for both mother and child.

ENJOYING YOUR PREGNANCY JOURNEY IN THAILAND

Pregnancy is a time of immense change and excitement. Embracing the local cuisine and incorporating a variety of healthy foods can make this journey even more enjoyable. Remember, the first 1,000 days are a critical period for your baby's development, and your nutritional choices play a significant role in shaping their future health. By planning ahead and making mindful dietary choices, you can support a healthy pregnancy and give your baby the best possible start in life.

As you navigate the vibrant culinary landscape of Thailand, take advantage of the abundant fresh produce, delicious flavors, and diverse food options available. Stay informed, consult with healthcare professionals as needed, and enjoy this special time in your life. Your commitment to good nutrition will benefit not only you but also your growing baby, setting the stage for a lifetime of health and well-being.

For more information on gestational diabetes: <https://www.bambiweb.org/news/gestational-diabetes>



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We are delighted to invite your child to join a "Fun Day" at The Purple Elephant. Children aged 18 months and above are welcome.

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We welcome your feedback at the end to ensure everyone's voice is heard and to shape future experiences.

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at the purple elephant



HOW TO GET YOUR KIDS INTO THE KITCHEN

Chinyere's love of cooking was handed down from her mother, and now her children are well on their way to sharing the family passion too. Here are her top ten tips on getting kids involved in cooking and preparing meals.

Photo by Dziana Hasanbekava from Pexels

About the Author

Chinyere Nwachukwu is a mom of three and entrepreneur. She helps other moms start and scale their own businesses from home by leveraging digital skills. When she's not working, she is spending time trying out new recipes in the kitchen or reading a thriller novel.



Growing up, my siblings and I were fully involved in cooking and meal preparation. Our mother taught us that cooking was a survival skill because we all need to eat. Not taking the opportunity to learn how to cook for yourself was a crime in her eyes.

I have three siblings, and all of us are like fairy godmothers in the kitchen. We can whip up amazing meals at the drop of a hat, and at various points of our lives, each of us has made a living from cooking.

As a mother of three, I also make sure that my children participate in kitchen activities. This involvement has increased their confidence and improved their creativity as each one tries to outdo the other in the kitchen. Beyond this, they will never have to depend on another person to cook for them because they don't know how.

How to get kids involved in cooking and meal preparation

1. Explain the importance of learning to cook

Start by explaining why knowing how to prepare a meal is an essential skill. It's almost as important as breathing. Let your kids know that being able to cook means they can take charge of their own health. It's a skill that empowers them, not a chore or call to servitude.

2. Make it fun

When cooking and meal prep are fun, kids will be more enthusiastic about participating. Here are some ways to make it enjoyable:

- **Create a theme night:** Have a taco night, pizza night, or even a breakfast-for-dinner night. Let your kids pick the theme and help prepare the meal.
- **Involve games:** Turn cooking into a game. You could have a mini cooking competition or time them while they chop vegetables. Growing up, we used to play a game called "Magic". We were allowed to create magic recipes from any three ingredients we could lay our hands on.
- **Music and cooking:** Play their favorite music while cooking. This can make the experience more enjoyable and less like a task.

3. Go grocery shopping together

Allow your kids to go grocery shopping with you and contribute to the process. Sometimes, I let my kids suggest the ingredients and groceries we need to buy. This involvement helps them understand where food comes from and what goes into making their favorite dishes.

4. Start with simple recipes and age-appropriate tasks

Tailor the tasks and recipes to fit your children's ages and skill levels and commend them for their work. This boosts their confidence and inspires them to want to participate more.

5. Teach safety first

Cooking can be fun, but it's essential to teach your kids about kitchen safety. Make sure they understand the importance of handling knives carefully, being cautious



Photo by Fanny Bastiera from Studio France

around hot surfaces, and cleaning up spills to avoid accidents.

6. Encourage experimentation

Allow your children to experiment with different ingredients and flavors. This not only makes cooking fun but also enhances their creativity and understanding of how different tastes and textures work together.

7. Make it a family affair

Cooking together as a family can be a wonderful bonding experience. Designate one night a week as a family cooking night where everyone has a role, from prepping ingredients to cooking and setting the table. This routine can create lasting memories and instill a love for cooking. Sometimes, my mom would make us cook outdoors over a large fire. The meals made like this always had a special taste and feel to them.

8. Celebrate their efforts

Always celebrate your kids' cooking efforts, no matter how small. Acknowledge their hard work and creativity. This positive reinforcement will encourage them to keep trying and improve their skills.

9. Create a recipe book together

Start a family recipe book where your kids can add their favorite recipes. They can decorate the pages, write notes about what they enjoyed, and even rate the recipes. This book can become a treasured keepsake and a source of pride for your children.

10. Lead by example

Finally, lead by example. Show your love for cooking and meal prep. When your kids see you enjoying the process, they're more likely to want to join in and develop their own love for cooking.

Getting kids involved in cooking and meal prep is about more than just teaching them a useful skill. It's about building confidence, encouraging creativity, and spending quality time together as a family. By making the process fun and engaging, you can help your children develop a lifelong appreciation for good food and the joy of cooking.



BANGKOK SUPPORT GROUPS

There are a range of support groups in Bangkok. Most are open to everyone, some ask for a small donation, and some require a reservation.

The groups listed here are run independently of BAMBI, except where otherwise noted. This listing is provided for informational purposes only, and inclusion does not constitute endorsement by BAMBI. Please contact the respective groups for more information.

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NUTRITION FOR THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND CHILD GROWTH

We all know that a balanced diet is important, but do you know what nutrients we need and where to find them? Pediatric nutritionist Dr Tanisa answers these questions.



Photo by Mikhail Nilov from Pexels

About the Author

Dr Tanisa Kwanbunbumpen is a pediatric nutritionist at Samitivej Children's Hospital Srinakarin, Bangkok, Thailand. A distinguished graduate of Srinakharinwirot University with First Class Honors, she has further honed her expertise in pediatric nutrition through specialized fellowship training at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital.



DProper nutrition is vital for the development of children's immune systems, gut microbiome health, and overall growth and well-being. A well-balanced diet rich in essential nutrients helps prevent malnutrition, supports the maturation of the immune system, reduces susceptibility to infections and chronic diseases, and promotes healthy growth and development in children.

MACRONUTRIENTS

Macronutrients are the three main categories of nutrients that provide the body with energy: carbohydrates, proteins, and lipids (fats). These macronutrients play a crucial role in supporting the immune system and in the growth and development of children.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the primary source of energy for the body and can be classified into two main categories: simple carbohydrates (sugars) and complex carbohydrates (starches and fiber). Certain types of complex carbohydrates, such as dietary prebiotics and fiber, provide additional benefits for child growth and development. Dietary prebiotics are non-digestible carbohydrates that serve as food for the beneficial bacteria in the gut, known as the intestinal microbiota. This helps to increase the number and diversity of good gut bacteria, which are essential for maintaining a healthy immune system. Fiber is another type of complex carbohydrate that provides additional benefits for gut health and immune function.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommends an intake of 14 g of fiber per 1,000 kilocalories (kcal) of energy consumed for people over the age of one. This intake helps to ensure that children are consuming enough fiber and prebiotics to support the development of a healthy gut microbiome and immune system.

Proteins

Proteins play a crucial role in the growth and development of children, including the proper functioning of their immune system. Proteins

are made up of amino acids—the building blocks of the body's cells, tissues, and organs. Adequate protein intake is particularly important during periods of rapid growth, such as the first years of life and puberty.

Protein-energy malnutrition can have significant impacts on a child's immune system. It can increase susceptibility to infections by affecting the body's ability to mount an immune response against foreign invaders. Protein deficiency can also lead to an impaired gastrointestinal barrier, which can make children more susceptible to intestinal pathogens. This can lead to more harmful bacteria in the intestine.

Food sources of protein are meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, and nuts. To ensure proper growth and development, as well as a healthy immune system, it is important for children to consume an appropriate amount of protein based on their age and sex.

Lipids

Lipids, also known as fats, provide a concentrated source of energy. Additionally, certain types of lipids, such as omega-3 fatty acids, have anti-inflammatory properties and can help regulate the immune system. The most important omega-3 fatty acid is docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which is critical for brain and eye development. It is recommended that children consume 100 mg of preformed DHA per day during the first two years of life.

The main dietary sources of DHA are oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines, though some fish can be high in mercury and should be limited to one serving per week to avoid poisoning. Other healthy sources of lipids for children include nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil, which provide a variety of beneficial fats, including monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids.

MICRONUTRIENTS

Micronutrients are essential vitamins and minerals that play a crucial role in supporting a child's immune system and overall health.

Vitamin A: This vitamin helps strengthen the body's natural defenses against infections. Good dietary sources include yellow and orange fruits and vegetables like pumpkin and carrots.

Vitamin B12: This vitamin is important for the immune system's ability to fight off threats. Good sources are meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Vegetarian children may need supplements to avoid deficiency.

Vitamin C: This vitamin enhances immune function, antibody production, and the function of the epithelial barrier. It helps prevent the activity of pro-inflammatory cytokines and acts as an antioxidant. Dietary sources of vitamin C include strawberries, kiwi, cantaloupe, and broccoli.

Vitamin D: This vitamin regulates the immune system and has anti-inflammatory effects. Good sources are fatty fish, egg yolks, and fortified foods. Sunlight exposure also helps the body produce vitamin D.

Zinc: Zinc is essential for maintaining a healthy immune system. Zinc deficiency can lead to diarrhea and respiratory infections. Good dietary sources of zinc are red meat, poultry, fish, and eggs, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.

Selenium: This mineral is required for normal immune function and reducing inflammation. The best sources are organ meats and seafood.

Copper: Copper has antimicrobial properties and helps the body produce specific antibodies. Liver and fish are rich in copper.

By ensuring children get a balanced, nutrient-rich diet with these key vitamins and minerals, parents and caregivers can help shape a robust immune system and promote healthy growth and development in their children.

References available at bambiweb.org.

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A SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS APPROACH TO COOKING RICE

Rice is a staple for families around the world, but recent studies have shown that eating too much of it can put our health at risk. Jeannie looks into why we should be mindful of the data and how we can cook our rice so it's both safe and nutritious.

Photo by MART PRODUCTION from Pexels



About the Author

Jeannie is currently pursuing an honors degree in psychology with a focus on clinical applications. Prior to this, she was an acupuncturist specializing in fertility, stress management, and pain relief in Sydney for 12 years. With her unique blend of Eastern and Western therapeutic approaches and maternal perspective, as feature writer, Jeannie promises a valuable contribution to BAMBI Magazine.



Photo by Jep Gambardella from Pexels

Rice is a staple food for many cultures and provides numerous nutritional benefits. It is an excellent source of carbohydrates, which are essential for providing energy. Rice also contains important vitamins and minerals such as vitamin B1 (thiamine), vitamin B6, magnesium, and phosphorus. Brown rice, in particular, is high in fiber, which aids in digestion and helps maintain healthy bowel function. Including rice as part of a balanced diet can contribute to overall health and well-being.

As a parent, I was shocked to learn that rice, a staple in our Japanese-Korean household, could be high in arsenic. Our family loves rice, and our 19-month-old, Kai, enjoys it too. This discovery made me anxious about the safety of one of our favorite foods.

What is arsenic and why should we remove it?

Arsenic is a natural element found in the earth's crust. It is often found in groundwater and soil, and it can subsequently enter our food, including rice, especially in places where its presence in the environment is increased due to human activities like burning coal, oil, gasoline, and wood; mining; and using arsenic compounds in medicines, herbicides, and wood preservatives.

Even low levels of arsenic exposure can be harmful over time. According to a study by Hensawang and Chanpiwat (2017), a significant percentage of rice in Bangkok contains arsenic levels above safe limits. This is concerning because rice is a staple food for many.

Long-term exposure to arsenic can lead to serious health problems like nerve damage, brain issues, and an increased risk of diabetes (Mohammed Abdul et al., 2015). Babies exposed to arsenic before birth may have a higher risk of developing cancers later in life (Mohammed Abdul et al., 2015).

How can I cook rice so it is safe?

Thankfully, I found a study by Menon et al. (2021) that offers a safer way to cook rice while preserving its nutritional value. By adopting this improved cooking method, you can significantly reduce the arsenic content in the rice you serve your family, ensuring that you and your baby enjoy a safe and nutritious meal.

1. Add filtered water: Use four cups of filtered water for every cup of uncooked rice and bring it to the boil.
2. Add rice: Once the water is boiling, add the rice and boil for another five minutes.
3. Discard the water: Drain the

water to remove a significant amount of arsenic.

4. Add fresh water: Add two cups of fresh water for each cup of raw rice.
5. Cook the rice: Cook the rice on low to medium heat with a lid on until all the water is absorbed.

This method removes up to 54% of inorganic arsenic from brown rice and 73% from white rice.

How much rice is safe to eat?

To minimize the risk of arsenic exposure, a study suggests that young children should consume no more than one serving of rice-based products per day (Islam et al., 2017). In Bangkok, brown jasmine rice contains significantly more arsenic than white rice so opting for white rice can help reduce your baby's arsenic intake (Hensawang & Chanpiwat, 2017).

By understanding the risks associated with arsenic in rice and finding ways to reduce these risks we can continue to enjoy this beloved food without compromising our health.

For references, further reading, and more information on the health risks from consuming different varieties of rice, check out the complete list of references for this article on bambiweb.org.

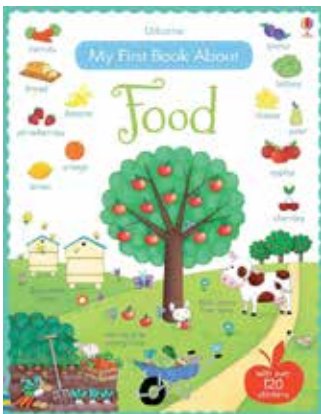
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Written by Felicity Brooks and Hannah Wood; illustrated by Rosalinde Bonnet



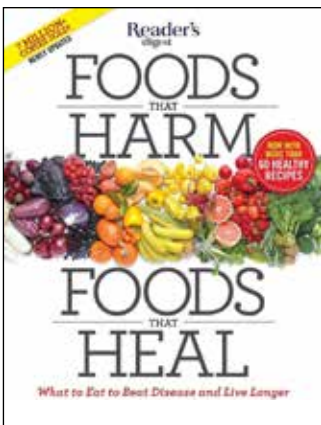
The topic of food is a perfect introduction to the format of nonfiction reference books for young children. This informative and educational hardcover book is filled with fun facts and vibrant illustrations from cover to cover. The comprehensive topics include all of the major food groups, food systems, cooking techniques, and food storage. Examples of delicious food from around the world include paella, sushi, risotto, and baguettes.

Like all Usborne books, this delicious guide has a way of grabbing children's attention through familiar bright images and interactive prompts. Children and parents will enjoy diving deeper with puzzles, how-to diagrams, and quizzes. The easy-to-follow cataloged format is followed by a glossary and an index. This book is sure to jump-start many appetizing discussions for curious and hungry young minds!

Published by Usborne Books in October 2010. Suitable for ages 3–8. A hardcover copy along with other Usborne Books can be found in the Children's Corner of the library.

FOODS THAT HARM, FOODS THAT HEAL: WHAT TO EAT TO BEAT DISEASE AND LIVE LONGER

A collection compiled and edited by Reader's Digest



For nearly a decade, "Foods That Harm, Foods That Heal" has been an essential resource for healthcare professionals, particularly dietitians and nutritionists. This book embodies the philosophy of "you are what you eat" and provides practical tools to put it into practice. The well-organized encyclopedic format makes it an accessible guide for anyone interested in lifestyle improvement through healthy eating.

Over 7 million copies of this bestseller have been sold worldwide. It includes over 170 unique food entries from apples to zucchini. Perhaps the most useful aspect of the book is the compilation of over 100 health conditions, including insomnia and hypertension, and an at-a-glance guide of foods to consume and to avoid for each ailment. Finally, the book includes over 60 delicious, easy, and healthy recipes.

Published by Trusted Media Brands in April 2018. A hardcover copy can be found in the nonfiction section of the library.

Prepared by Angela Chen for the Neilson Hays Library.

The Neilson Hays Library is Thailand's premier English-language library. The Children's Program offers Saturday Story Time, a cozy Children's Corner, and special holiday events. Adult Programs include concerts, art exhibitions, book club, and book sales. Located in a UNESCO-awarded historic building with a garden and cafe on site: 195 Surawong Road, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Follow us on Instagram and Facebook.



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TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF SHINGLES

After a nasty bout of shingles recently, Anelia shares some good-to-know details about the virus and reflects on what the experience has taught her.

Photo by Karolina Grabowska from Pexels

About the Author

Anelia is a performing artist from South Africa. She has been living and working as a teacher in Thailand for ten years. She also writes educational children's books, makes music, and loves to spend time in the kitchen. Follow her adventures on IG @ aneliavz.

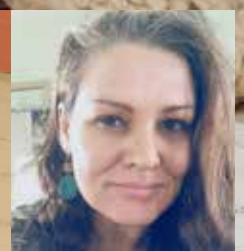




Photo by bongkam thanyakij from Pexels

Recently, I had shingles; something that I'd heard of in the past as a disease that older and unhealthy people get. I was wrong. I'm 43. I eat nutritious food. I exercise three to four times a week. I sleep seven to eight hours a night. I do enjoy a glass of wine on occasion. Still, I'm generally fortunate to be strong and healthy. Or at least I was until shingles arrived. It started with a headache, which I thought was a migraine. After three days of headache treatment, the pain didn't subside. I contacted my brother, a doctor in Canada, who thought I might have shingles even though I had no rash yet, only a headache that worsened by the hour. My brother started me on antiviral medication (acyclovir) and the next day, I was admitted to hospital. My local doctor informed me that I was fortunate to have started my treatment early enough to avoid damage to my brain or eyes.

What is shingles?

Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox, and results from VZV reactivating in our bodies after dormancy. But what triggers this viral sleeper agent to awaken? The answer is complex. While anyone who has had chickenpox can develop shingles, the reactivation of the virus is a complex interplay of various factors, with the patient's overall health and age playing a

significant role. The primary risk factor for shingles is a weakened immune system. If your immune system is compromised, VZV can return to life. This underscores the importance of a robust immune system in preventing shingles.

A number of factors can weaken our immune system (2,3). The first is age, as the strength of our immune system naturally declines as we age. There are also diseases that target the immune system such as human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) or hypogammaglobulinemia, and a number of autoimmune diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, and lupus. Certain medications like chemotherapy, long-term use of corticosteroids, and anti-inflammatory medications also weaken our immune system, as does physical or mental trauma because hemorrhages, fractures, or prolonged psychological stress cause the release of cortisol and adrenaline, which can harm the immune system (3,4). Finally, our own lifestyle choices are important as an unhealthy lifestyle is likely to weaken our immune system.

Symptoms of shingles

Early symptoms include pain, itching, or tingling in the area where a rash will form. Some people also experience a fever or headache during this period (5). A few days after the early symptoms appear,

the physical symptoms start to show. These include a raised rash in the affected area, fluid-filled blisters that eventually break open and scab over after approximately ten days, and mild to severe pain in the affected area (6). The most obvious symptom is the rash that mostly appears on the torso or face but can also show on other body parts. The rash is almost always limited to one side of the body and one particular dermatome—an area of skin linked to one specific nerve level in the spinal cord or brain.

Treatment of shingles

The sooner treatment starts, the better. Delaying treatment can cause severe health issues. If you suspect that you might have shingles, it is essential to contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Shingles treatment consists of antiviral and pain relief medication. The antivirals used for the treatment are acyclovir, famciclovir, or valacyclovir. Pain relief medications include nerve-calming medications like pregabalin, gabapentin, or amitriptyline, and anti-inflammatory agents like ibuprofen, and topical numbing agents like capsaicin. Your healthcare provider will prescribe the proper medication that suits your needs (7,8).

Prevention of shingles

Your approach to preventing shingles will depend on your age



Photo by Julia Malinowska from capturenow

and health history, but here are some generally applicable ideas.

First off, avoid it. If you have never had chickenpox or its vaccine, it's essential to steer clear of anyone with active shingles or chickenpox. Exposure wouldn't put you at risk of shingles, but it would put you at risk of developing chickenpox.

Secondly, consider getting vaccinated. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has licensed Zostavax and Shingrix as effective vaccines against shingles and both of these are available in Thailand. Shingrix is the newer, more effective vaccine and provides protection for many years.

Thirdly, choose a healthier lifestyle. Our choices have consequences, and making the right ones is essential. Eating a nutritious diet, staying physically active, and getting adequate sleep are all vital for a healthy body and mind. Kicking the butt of smoking habits (mind the pun) and controlling how much alcohol you consume are a bonus! (9)

Finally, try to reduce your stress levels. Evidence shows that VZV can reactivate under stress. Numerous effective methods exist to alleviate stress, such as yoga, meditation, and engaging in a hobby or any other activity that you find soothing.

Shingles aftercare

Unfortunately many people suffer from post-herpetic neuralgia—a pain condition that persists for months or, in some people, years after the viral disease has cleared. This is because of damage to the nerve in which the virus made “a home” during the active phase. Fortunately the same medications that treat shingles can also help with the aftercare.

What I've learned

It's been a week since the feared virus showed its early symptoms. I've completed my antiviral course, rested, and started to take more care of my mental health. It is clear that, in my case, chronic stress played a huge role in the reactivation of the virus. Although I've been taking psychotropic medication for many years, I sometimes forget to make time for myself and my mental health. It's easy to get into a vicious

cycle of constant work, unhealthy eating habits, no physical activity, and worry. Having shingles was terrible. It was the worst physical pain I have ever felt, and this is coming from someone who has had fractured ribs and a fractured skull, hip, and pelvis. But, with all the pain, I realized the importance of caring for “me”. I recognized the times I neglected myself, was not a nice person to myself, and didn't listen to my body. All of this manifested as physical stress on my body and thus led to a decline in my immune system. Stress is a “silent killer”. It creeps closer and closer until it's too late and may cause havoc in your life when it transforms into a stress-related medical condition. Therefore, it is vital to find activities to deliberately combat stress and look after our bodies and minds.

It won't happen overnight, and that is OK, but day by day, I will build a healthier and happier me, and, in the process, stay grateful for the lessons I have learned during painful times. Shingles happened, but it could never steal my loud laugh, sense of humor, or lust for life. Onwards and upwards!

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PLAY WITH ME!

WHY YOUR CHILD NEEDS QUALITY TIME WITH YOU

With so much going on in our lives it can be hard to make time for our families. Anna reminds us how important quality time with their parents is to children.

Photo by Tatiana Syrikova from Pexels

About the Author

Anna works for New Counseling Service (NCS), the first and only licensed mental health center in the heart of Bangkok. NCS has provided counseling services in Thailand and surrounding regions for over 20 years, with therapists specializing in a wide variety of issues such as anxiety, depression, work stress, relationships, and more. Contact: info@ncsbkk.com; Phone: +66-2-114-7556; ncsbkk.com; FB/IG: @ncsbkk.





Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels

Something that is often highlighted in parenting is spending time with your children, but not just time—quality time. Spending quality time with your child is beneficial to their emotional development, and our counselors at NCS often find that when children act out or misbehave, it's because they want to spend more time with their parents. This is what many might call the classic "cry for attention". Ignore them or tell them off and it will go away, right? Well, not really! Of course, consequences are important, but it's also important to get to the root cause of the issue—why are they behaving like this? Is it because they've never received consequences for their actions before, or is it because they are hoping you'll give them some of your time? Let's dig a little deeper into the importance of parent-child quality time, and how this can affect your child's behavior and emotional well-being.

Look at me

When children don't get to spend quality time with their parents, they do things they think will get your attention so they can be with you, and more often than not, this results in misbehavior. Think about it—if

you haven't been able to spend time with your child lately and they're not misbehaving, that means they're fine on their own, right? If you're busy it can be easy to ignore a child who is doing well and keeping out of trouble. But if the child does get into trouble, then you do have to pay attention. Some parents assign other people to take care of this, with the result that the child acts out even more in the hope that they will finally do something worthy of their parents' attention.

Not spending quality time with your child can make them feel neglected, unloved, and unwanted, and for some children, this might cause them to think that bad attention is better than no attention at all. If getting into trouble is the only way kids can get their parents' attention, they will most likely keep doing it. Some might think that they'll grow out of it or that it won't impact them in any lasting way. However, NCS child therapist Savinee says not getting quality time with parents can cause "a wound or a feeling of deep hurt within children which they often harbor into adolescence and even adulthood." This in turn can affect their relationship with themselves and others.

Emotional impacts

Let's look at some examples: if a child grows to think of themselves as fundamentally unlovable, they might become a people pleaser, doing anything to make people love them, or they might struggle to form connections with others, as they think that they are unlikable. However this behavior manifests, their relationship with themselves is damaged, and we don't want that! On the other hand, a child who can only get attention by being disruptive might continue to act out even in adulthood because they think this is the only way they can be seen and heard. This might be either conscious or unconscious. As mentioned in my article, "The Healthy Way to Respond to Your Child" (BAMBI Magazine July/August 2024), adults often don't realize that certain issues they have as grown-ups stem from their childhood. These things can sometimes ingrain themselves deeply into our emotional world without us being aware of it.

What is quality time?

Now that we've covered the importance of spending quality time with your children, let's consider what quality time looks like. Savinee

shares this example: “If you are physically with them but typing on your phone, they might feel like you’re not actually there. Your presence itself is not enough.” Quality time means giving them your full attention—your heart has to be in it.

The specifics of what quality time looks like can differ for each child—they might want you to play with them, tell you about their day, watch a movie together, or help you with whatever you’re doing! Ask them what they want to do to really make that quality time special, and if they just want to sit with you while you each do your own thing, then that’s fine. That might not fully fit into the definition I just gave of quality time, but that might be what your child currently needs. Perhaps they just want your comforting presence

while they deal with something on their own, or maybe they just want your quiet company. This doesn’t completely replace quality time, but it’s still a form of support. Children need different things at different times, and it’s important to gauge what type of support they need in the current moment.

Build a routine

I understand that life can get busy. It’s easy to get distracted by everything else going on and to keep saying “maybe next time” to your child as you frantically try to juggle it all. Don’t worry—it happens! What you can do is be more aware of how important spending quality time with your child is so that you can make time. Getting to spend time with you means the world to them, and of course to you as you watch them grow. We

recommend creating a routine where you spend at least 20–30 minutes of quality time with your child per day, and more if possible. A routine helps integrate quality time into your daily life, and if you really can’t spend time with them for some reason, explain to them why so they know it has nothing to do with them.

When we grow up, we have a hundred different things that fill up our daily lives, but young children who are so new to the world only know their parents, school, and friends; hence they view parents as such a large part of their world, and being with you is so important to them. We encourage you to cherish every moment together—it might not seem like it, but children grow up in the blink of an eye. Treasure it!



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NOW WE ARE FOUR

Following the happy arrival of a new baby, Joe reflects on how different the second pregnancy was, and on all the lessons they've failed to learn from having a first child.



About the Author

Joe and his wife Diane moved to Thailand in 2018. Since the arrival of their son Martin in 2021 and daughter Alice in 2024, Joe has been a stay-at-home father. The whole family enjoys BAMBI playgroups and Thai beach holidays.



We've just added a daughter to our family, and while we're feeling exhausted, we're very pleased with ourselves. The arrival of a second child has been very different to the arrival of a first child. Although the sense of bewilderment that they would entrust us with something so fragile was familiar, much else was strange. Those people who told us that once you have one child, a second isn't that much harder were either lying or confusing raising children with something altogether easier like lion taming. The extra challenge of a second child starts even before conception.

Let's talk about sex

I think we all understand the basic mechanics of getting pregnant, and if not, go ask mommy or daddy because I'm not explaining it here. Initially I thought it might be fun and encourage us to have more, what

I shall euphemistically call, quality time together. I was wrong—it was awful. Pretty soon I was exhausted and reduced to quietly hoping that if I fell asleep quickly enough, I wouldn't have to perform. A typical evening's conversation might go something like this: "Do we really have to have sex again? You promised me that if we did it this morning we wouldn't have to do it again tonight." When that didn't work I'd protest: "You can't still be ovulating." Finally I'd give in: "OK, OK, but I'm not going to enjoy it." At which point my wife would assure me that I didn't need to enjoy it, and that she certainly wouldn't. Hardly the happy marriage-affirming action we were hoping for.

It was a merciful relief when we fell pregnant and could stop having sex. We eventually gave it another go and even discovered it could be enjoyable. Then the morning

sickness hit and sex was canceled. I would've felt bad, but pretty much everything was making my wife feel sick at this point. She even turned down cake, which had me worried for a moment.

This feast or famine approach to sex was hardly unique to a subsequent pregnancy, but the presence of a first child in the house certainly made it more challenging. When we were trying to conceive, Marty would choose to take hours to get to sleep, then wake up screaming for Daddy just as we were approaching the critical moment. Nothing like spending 20 minutes wrestling a small child back into bed to really put a dampener on the mood. But no excuses would be accepted and we'd have to start the whole weary process again.

I could go on but I don't want to give the impression that I'm

obsessed with sex, and there were other features of this pregnancy I want to touch on.

Let me help you with that

Morning sickness and indeed pregnancy in general looks pretty rough. A cruel trick played on the female population. First time round I was full of sympathy and nothing was too much trouble. I would happily traipse round our local 7-Eleven in search of the one variety of hard candy my wife thought she might be able to stomach. I'd solicitously suggest my wife rest on the sofa while I brought her cups of herbal tea and searched for tasty snacks she might be tempted by. If she wanted a foot rub then a foot rub she would have. When cramps or allergies would wake her in the night, I'd sympathetically share her sleepless hours.

The second time around my attitude was rather different. I considered the time my wife spent lying on the couch feeling sick to be little better than malingering. As for hard candies, if she wanted them, she could go buy them herself, and while she was at it, why not take Marty too? He'd like the chance to play with Mummy again. If anyone deserved foot rubs or tasty snacks, I felt it was me after another broken night's sleep with Marty and three hours of chasing him around Lumpini Park. As for waking me up with allergies, I was a strong "no" to that—if she was going to sneeze, she could go sleep in the spare room. Marty was providing all the abrupt middle-of-the-night wakings I needed.

As I made very clear to anyone who would listen, it seemed like I spent nine months putting Marty to bed, soothing him in the night, getting him up well before the break of day, and then entertaining him for hours, while mummy just about found the energy for work, but not much more. Rarely, I imagine, can a husband have complained quite so much



during a pregnancy. Not quite the same loving tone that we heard with the first pregnancy, and certainly not the consideration that I'm sure we all agree my wife deserved. But very much the reality of her experience. If she wanted sympathy, she should have had a less high-energy toddler and chosen a less irritable husband.

Hello, who are you?

Despite the nine months of pregnancy, Alice's arrival still came as a bit of a shock. Up to her birth I was still thinking I'd make it to one of her hospital appointments, see an ultrasound, listen to her heartbeat, and get to feel the excitement of her impending arrival. Instead, the first time I went to hospital was for the birth. The doctors must

have been wondering who I was and why I was following them into surgery. Fortunately, despite almost no involvement with Alice prepartum, aside from conceptually, as discussed above, as soon as she was placed in my arms, I felt that connection which I'd failed to build in the previous nine months.

Similarly, where we had spent weeks preparing Marty's cot, car seat, and stroller in advance, for Alice these things were all done in a frantic rush of YouTube videos after she was born. Which also meant they were done by me while my wife was in hospital—not ideal even though she selected the YouTube videos for me to follow and issued very clear instructions. It was three weeks before we realized that I'd forgotten

to attach part of the stroller, clearly not an important piece as I've repeatedly pointed out. After taking the car seat apart to clean it, and forgetting to follow the instructions to remember how I took it apart, I had to spend a late night repeatedly rewatching a video, in Russian, to discover how it went back together. Turns out there simply wasn't the time to look after a toddler and prepare properly for the arrival of a new baby.

What do we do now?

Having already had a baby, we should surely know what we're meant to do this time around—just do the same as we do with Marty, right? Well yes, except Marty is now three years old and seems like a giant compared to Alice. Plus, most of my time with Marty is spent throwing him onto the sofa or spinning him in circles, both things I'm almost certain you're not meant to do with newborns. Although since I haven't re-read any of the baby books, I'm not totally sure.

I'm again surprised at how small and fragile a new baby is, and very dubious that we're adequately equipped to take care of her. I'd also forgotten, dare I say it, how easy looking after a baby is compared to looking after a toddler. Today I was in charge of Alice and I didn't have to do any running; not once was I required to pretend to be a tickle monster; I wasn't bitten or trodden on. OK, so there was a lot of screaming and I was copiously pooped on once, but that is nothing to a seasoned parent. Furthermore, the screaming could be resolved with another milk bottle, a new nappy, or a cuddle, and I could do all this from the comfort of my living room while watching Netflix. Amazing. Obviously playing with Marty is great and I look forward to Alice growing up so I can chase the pair of them as a terrifying tickle monster, but it's a lovely change of pace to parent while sitting down.



I want to hold the baby!

It's amazing having my wife at home all day on maternity leave. It means that for six months there will be two of us to play with the children. For the past few months it's been me and Marty together, and the first few days with a newborn are obviously mother and baby time. Now, however, Marty gets to play with his mommy again, and I get to stay with Alice while they go off on adventures.

Of course this doesn't guarantee that I get to hold Alice as I first have to pry her out of her nanny's clasp. Not an easy matter, but with a little cunning subterfuge, such as pretending there's an important delivery or a strange cat that needs

driving away, I can manage it. Then I just have to stay alert, since the slightest lapse in concentration will see Alice seized and me relegated to milk mixer and bottle carrier. However, once I've got Alice and locked Nanny out, we can relax in front of a movie and I can finally get to know and love my daughter.

Photos courtesy of the author.



MEET JEANNIE

Relocating to another country always comes with its ups and downs, but Jeannie shares how she and her family are making the most of their move from the East Coast of Australia to our beloved Bangkok.

Where are you from and what's your nationality?

My husband and I are both from Sydney, Australia. My nationality is Korean, while my husband is Japanese.

Can you tell us about your life back home?

Life back at home was very predictable. Monday to Friday was me working at various acupuncture clinics from 7:30am to 7:30pm, then coming home and relaxing before bedtime. Weekends were usually a mix of seeing friends and family, and chores.

Can you tell us something about your career and work? And what about your spouse?

I am currently focusing on upskilling by studying psychology. My aim is to become a clinical psychologist so that I can integrate psychology into my acupuncture clinic when I return to Australia. My husband is a tech-geek and product manager for start-up tech companies.

Please tell us a little bit about your family.

We have a 19-month-old son, Kai, who was born in Samitivej Srinakarin. He continues to surprise us with his ever-evolving developmental phases. We have traveled almost every month either internationally or interstate, so Kai is a very well-traveled baby, and we hope that we can continue providing him with worldly experiences. We also love raising our little family of three here as Bangkok is incredibly convenient and more affordable than Sydney.

When did you come to Thailand?

My husband and I moved to Thailand in August 2021, which was during COVID restrictions. Thankfully, we already knew a few familiar faces when we arrived in Chitlom, Bangkok, and these familiar faces have now become our surrogate family.

What do you miss the most about your country?

A few things: really good Vietnamese pho and banh mi from Marrickville; taking long road trips along the Eastern coastline of Australia and admiring the stunning, pristine beaches; fish and chips; and of course, our friends and family.

Can you tell us a bit about your routine here in Bangkok?

Monday to Friday is a chaotic mix of doing my thesis, going to Pilates (when I can), running errands, and spending time with Kai. Friday afternoon is always spent at our surrogate family's place for a playdate and wine (shout-out to Somaly!). Weekends are reserved for precious family time, when we either explore new parts of Bangkok or chill at our regular favorite spots with our friends.



What do you love most about Thailand?

I love my nanny the most. She has been able to give me both the headspace and time to pursue my degree in psychology, as well as the privilege to be my best self for my family. I also love and appreciate that you can be in a different country within an hour, which is near impossible when living in Sydney! As a result, we have traveled to neighboring countries almost every other month.

Which parts of Thailand have you traveled to, and which did you enjoy the most?

With Kai, we have traveled to Phuket, Hua Hin, Kanchanaburi, Krabi, and Pattaya. We enjoyed Hua Hin the most—Kai got to have his first horse-riding experience!

What were your main challenges when you first arrived in Thailand?

My main challenge when first arriving in Thailand was navigating around Chitlom and knowing where to buy simple things, like groceries. Thankfully, my friends showed me where to buy groceries (in person), and if urgent, to buy on Grab.

How did you find out about BAMBI?

I found out about BAMBI through my friend, Sheena. She recommended BAMBI to me when I found out I was pregnant. She then recommended me as a volunteer writer for BAMBI as well.

Are there any specific suggestions you can give to BAMBI's new members here in Bangkok?

If you have young children, definitely visit the BAMBI-organized playgroups. Both you and your child can make everlasting connections with other families at these events.



BAMBI Committee, 2024

Want to have fun, work together with other great parents, brush up on your professional skills, and do something for the BAMBI community? This is your chance.

BAMBI is run by a group of lovely and dedicated volunteers, and from time to time, a number of critical roles need to be filled to ensure ongoing service to our members. BAMBI is a fun and welcoming community of like-minded parents trying to support and improve the parenting experience for all families in Bangkok. If you have some time and passion to spare, come and join us. To apply or if you have any questions about these volunteer opportunities, please email vicechairwoman@bambiweb.org, detailing which position(s) you are interested in. Please note that as per BAMBI's constitution, interested candidates are required to have an active membership at the time of applying.

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