



BLOSSOM

NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE DESK OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR: DR. BANI KUMAR MITRA



A Woman's Best Friend From Teenage To Menopause And Beyond

As a gynaecologist, I have had the privilege of walking alongside women at every stage of their lives—through their joys, challenges, and transformations. Over the years, I've been deeply moved by how my patients and their journeys have shaped not only my experience as a doctor but also as a person.

In their teenage years, I meet young girls who are just beginning to understand their bodies. These first steps are crucial—visits during this time help address concerns about menstrual health, navigating puberty, and promoting healthy habits for the years to come. I often see the nervousness in their eyes as they ask delicate questions about the changes they are experiencing. It's here, with gentle guidance, that a foundation is laid—not just for health, but for trust.

I see them again in their twenties, now confident young women, but with new questions, new dreams, and sometimes new fears. They come to me, not as patients but as friends, seeking advice on matters that will shape their futures. And I find myself not just giving clinical answers, but listening—understanding that my role has grown into something more, something deeply personal.

Then comes the next chapter—the reproductive years. This stage is filled with hope and sometimes anxiety as many women seek help with family planning, prenatal care, and fertility treatments. Each time I witness the miracle of new life, the joy is indescribable. It's as though I share a part of that family's happiness, knowing I've had the privilege of walking alongside them through their journey.

In recent years, I've been receiving visits from patients I met at the start of my career—this time for menopause management. It's humbling to have walked such a long path with them, from their first consultation to now supporting them through the challenges of menopause. What makes this even

more special is when their daughters, whom I once met as children, now come to me for advice on starting families of their own. It's a beautiful circle of life that keeps me connected to the community in ways I never imagined when I first began this journey.

One story that comes to mind is that of Mrs. Das, who first came to me almost 30 years ago, anxious about her struggles to conceive. We worked together through her fertility journey, and I was there to see her joy when she finally held her first child in her arms. When Mrs. Das recently visited me again, this time seeking help with menopause, we reminisced about those early days. Today, we laugh together, sharing stories about her children, and I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude that I've been a part of this family's life for so long. To complete this beautiful cycle, her daughter, who was once part of that journey, now visits me for advice on starting her own family. Moments like these remind me why I chose this path and how deeply our lives have become intertwined.

I am immensely grateful for the privilege of being a gynecologist. When women trust me with their most intimate challenges, from their first teenage concerns to the joys and trials of motherhood, and finally the changes of menopause, I don't just see patients—I see lifelong companions. Every woman I meet reminds me that this profession is more than a career—it's a commitment to be present for every chapter of their lives.

As we close this edition of Blossom, let us take a moment to celebrate the strength, resilience, and beauty of women at every stage of life. With Durga Puja approaching, I reflect on the strength and grace I witness in each of you—the very essence of Maa Durga herself. This festive season, I pray that you are surrounded by love, resilience, and hope. May the goddess watch over you, just as I have had the honor of doing all these years.

From our family at Abha Surgy to yours, may you have a joyous and blessed Durga Puja.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DR. NILOTPAL ROY: FROM MORNING SURGERIES TO MIDNIGHT EMERGENCIES

A Day in the Life of Dr. Nilotpall Roy: A Glimpse Behind the Scrubs

As dawn breaks and the city slowly stirs awake, Dr. Nilotpall Roy has already begun his day. Being a gynecologist is not just a profession; it's a constant dance between the planned and the unpredictable. With surgeries scheduled, emergencies waiting to happen, and countless lives to touch, each day is a delicate balance of skill, compassion, and fortitude.



Morning Surgeries: When Precision Meets Calm

"How do you feel about early morning operations, Dr. Roy?" we ask.



"Not every morning feels like jumping out of bed," he chuckles, "especially when it's cold, and my bed feels too comfortable to leave. But I've learned from my mentors that morning is the best time for surgeries. Patients are fresher, more at ease, and complications are easier to manage when everyone's fully alert and resources are at hand."

It's not just about medical precision; it's about timing, calmness, and being fully present for the patients who put their trust in him.

Late-Night C-Sections: The Reality of a Gynecologist's Life

Life doesn't slow down once the sun sets. Emergencies come knocking at the most unpredictable hours, and Dr. Roy knows this all too well. Late-night C-sections, which can happen two to three times a month, often find him back in the operating room after a full day's work.

"Each night-time emergency is a reminder of why I chose this path," he reflects. "It's not just me, though—it's a team effort. I'm blessed with a fantastic team who are always ready, no matter the hour."

A Day Filled with Lives: Consultations, Connections, and Care

With his rounds of surgeries complete, Dr. Roy heads to his clinic. On an average day, he consults with 20 to 25 patients, each at a different point in their health journey. Whether it's a routine check-up, follow-up care, or more serious consultations, Dr. Roy takes the time to guide each patient through their reproductive health needs.

In a world of constant connection, many patients reach out beyond their appointments. "Yes, my patients call me quite often," he smiles. "I've set up a system where they can message me on WhatsApp if I'm in surgery. It's all about balance—being accessible without letting it take over your day."



Finding Family in a Hectic Schedule

Time with family can often feel like a luxury for someone whose career demands such intensity. Still, Dr. Roy finds ways to make the most of it. “After my clinic hours, I make it a point to spend time with my children. I pick them up from their tuitions, and we have dinner together. These moments may be short, but they are precious.”

Of course, the job never fully stops. Emergencies can strike even during family time, but Dr. Roy’s family



has come to understand and adapt to the demands of his life.

Unwinding: The Secret to Staying Grounded

Despite the whirlwind of surgeries, consultations, and late-night calls, Dr. Roy finds small pockets of “me” time. “I love driving from the office to the OPD, listening to music. It’s my stress buster,” he shares. Reading, once a passion, has taken a back seat, but retirement holds the promise of rekindling these personal joys.

A Life with Purpose

At the end of the day, Dr. Nilotpal Roy’s journey is not just one of professional dedication—it’s a life filled with meaning. “Each moment, whether it’s in the operating room, consulting with a patient, or sharing a meal with my family, has its purpose. That’s why I wouldn’t trade this life for anything.”



Guest Column

PCOS URGED ME TO ADOPT A MINDFUL & SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE



RISHIKA RAMPURIA

Product Manager

As a teenager, I received a diagnosis that would change my life forever: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). With limited awareness and a plethora of concerns, my mom and I embarked on a quest to find a sustainable treatment plan. We were determined to avoid medications, fearing their potential side effects.

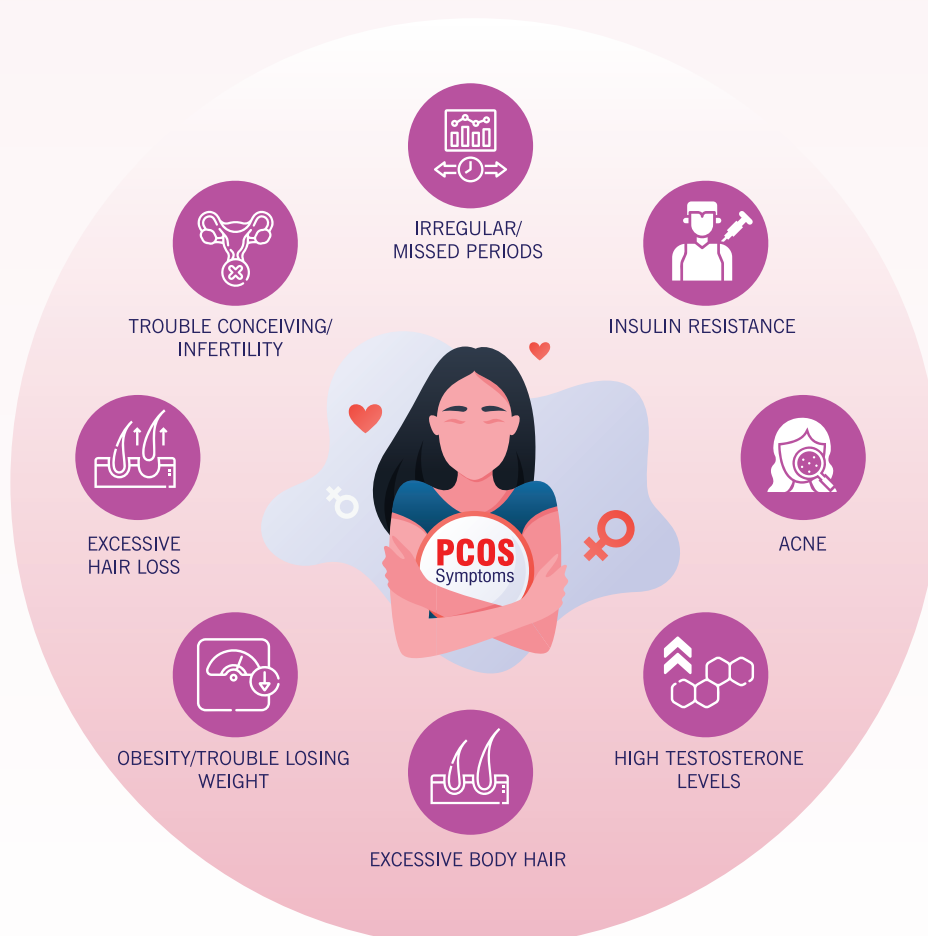
Through lifestyle modifications, I experienced a significant improvement in my menstrual cycle and acne management. However, as I entered my 20s, my diet and exercise routine took a hit. I started developing symptoms that would plague me for years to come: cystic acne, hair fall, menstrual irregularities, anxiety and weight gain. Before I knew it, I had gained 15 Kgs.

For years, I tried various remedies, but it wasn't until April this year that I stumbled upon a game-changer. Collaborating with a functional medicine organization, I realized that PCOS was not an illness

to be treated, but rather a call to action – a reminder to correct my lifestyle. I began to focus on whole, fiber-rich foods, minimal gluten and eliminated dairy. I also prioritized vitamin sufficiency, mindfulness, and regular exercise.

The transformation has been remarkable. After just four months of committed effort, I have noticed significant improvements in my weight, health and biomarkers. My journey has taught me that PCOS is not a disease, but rather my body's way of urging me to adopt a mindful and sustainable lifestyle.

Don't view PCOS as a limitation, but rather an opportunity to transform your life. By making conscious choices about your diet, exercise and mindfulness, you can take control of your health and well-being. Remember, it is not about treating PCOS, but about embracing a sustainable lifestyle that nourishes your body, mind and spirit.



BANISH MYTHS ABOUT WOMEN'S HEALTH

In many countries, including India, sex and sexual health are taboo topics that lead to a lot of confusion with myths and misconceptions. These myths and misconceptions are directly responsible for creating harm by spreading wrong information and/or half-truths. Women feel a lot of anxiousness, shame and guilt and endanger their own health and well-being through unwanted societal barriers and grandmothers' tales that have come down over generations. Spreading awareness and encouraging open communication will help women take control of their lives and ensure their well-being and happiness.

Let us here discuss the most-common myths

Myth 1

Women's Sexual Health Issues Are Personal And Private, And Best Not Discussed Openly: False. Open

Discussed Openly: False. Open communication and therapy will help a woman address her queries and anxieties by offering a supportive and non-judgmental space where her concerns get addressed and solved. Healthy sexual expression, care and support should be available to all women.



Myth 2

Self-Diagnosis And Self-Treatment Of Sexuality Is Okay For A Woman: False. Do not ignore seeking

Okay For A Woman: False. Do not ignore seeking help of a healthcare professional and stop ending up taking advice from quacks. It may be a period of extreme distress impacting your self-esteem, but this is when you need expert help. Female sexuality is controlled by a complex interaction of many factors including physiological, psychological, hormonal and social. Only a healthcare expert is equipped to evaluate your specific case and work out the treatment/management of the same.



Myth 3

You Visit A Gynaecologist Only When You Sense Something Is Not Right Down There: Of course,

Something Is Not Right Down There: Of course, you must definitely see Obstetric/Gynaecologist when you observe certain evident signs like lumps or growths, irregular and painful periods, irregular vaginal bleeding or unexplained lower abdomen or back pain. But, make it a point to factor in a well-woman checkup on a regular basis. Let it be a part of your annual health exam. Getting an all-clear from



your Obstetric/Gynaecologist is a must for your overall physical wellbeing and mental health. Do not wait for causes of stress and anxiety to disturb you before rushing to the doctor.

Myth 4

Young Unmarried Women Have No Need To Visit A Gynaecologist: False. According to studies by renowned healthcare bodies, girls should go for their first Obstetrics/Gynaecologists visit between the ages of 13-15 years. Between the ages of 18 – 21 years, a woman should be visiting her Obstetric/Gynaecologist annually. During these regular visits, the healthcare professional is able to evaluate key aspects of a patient's health, including her weight and blood pressure. The Obstetric/Gynaecologist is also the right source to discuss contraception and other reproductive concerns and dispel myths and misconceptions floating around in the patient's head.



Myth 5

My Gynaecologist Will Judge Me, No Need To Be Honest During My Consultation: False. This is both foolish and dangerous for the patient. Given that it may be odd to discuss intimate issues with a doctor, you need to remind yourself that you are visiting a healthcare professional who has your best interests at heart and is working for your specific treatment. Provide honest and correct information for successful management of your health issue. Go ahead and ask questions, and discuss concerns and symptoms regarding your sexual or reproductive health.



Myth 6

Gynaecological Consultations Are Only For Women Who Want Babies: False. Obstetric/Gynaecologist consultation is recommended for women who have been diagnosed with or believed to be suffering from any condition that affects parts of the female reproductive system such as the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. A woman does not have to be sick or pregnant to have an Obstetric/Gynaecologist



consultation. The consultation may be required as part of gynaecological screening (including but not limited to breast, pelvic, abdominal, vaginal, uterine and rectal). Essentially, all parts of the body that may have a profound effect or be linked to symptoms affecting the reproductive system.

Women who want to conceive a child also need to visit an Obstetric/Gynaecologist, and especially if they have certain conditions that may cause infertility. If the woman is already pregnant, she needs to consult an Obstetric/Gynaecologist on a regular basis through her pregnancy who will provide the necessary maternal care to help her prepare for childbirth, carry the foetus to full term, and ultimately deliver a healthy baby.

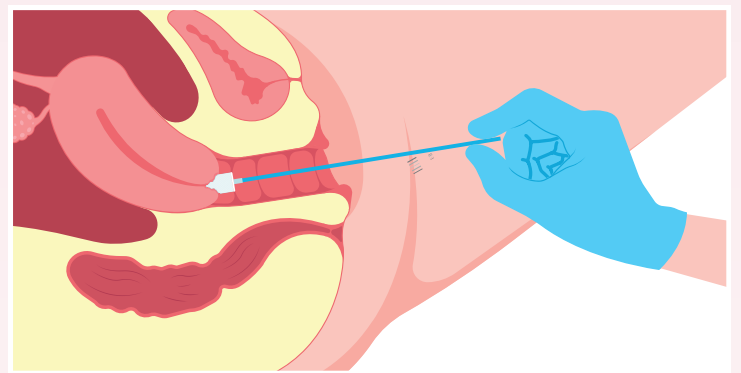
The healthcare professional may recommend genetic screening to determine if the baby has certain genetic or congenital disorders.

Myth 7

Breast Or Cervical Cancer Does Not Run In My Family, So I Am Safe: False. There are several possible causes of breast and cervical cancer other than being passed down genetically. According to World Health Organisation (WHO), certain factors increase the risk of breast cancer including increasing age, obesity, family history of breast cancer, history of radiation exposure, harmful use of alcohol, reproductive history (such as age that menstrual periods began and age at first pregnancy), tobacco use and postmenopausal hormone therapy. Approximately half of breast cancers develop in women who have no identifiable breast cancer risk factor other than gender (female) and age (over 40 years). Lack of a known family history does not necessarily mean that a woman is at reduced risk. Similarly, in case of cervical cancer, economic conditions, a diet low in fruits and vegetables, young age at full-term pregnancy, long term use of oral contraceptives, *Chlamydia* infection, and risk factors are involved apart from family history.

Myth 8

Routine Pap Smear Will Also Test For STD: False. A Pap smear is a clinical procedure that involves *collecting cells from the cervix for testing*. It also is called a Pap test. It is the main screening test for cervical cancer and pre-cancerous changes in the cervix. A common misconception in patients is that a Pap test will automatically screen for STDs too. This is not the case. If you wish to get tested for STDs, you would need blood and urine tests. Your Obstetric/Gynaecologist may order this after examining you, or you may wish to point it out to the doctor if you are concerned.



Myth 9

IUDs Are Risky And Should Be Avoided: IUDs (Intra-uterine devices) prevent pregnancy when inserted into the uterus. IUD is a small, T-shaped plastic device that is used for birth control and has been found to be 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. It is also one of the cheapest forms of birth control devices as it lasts a long time inside the woman's body. There are certain cons like taking the help of a healthcare provider to insert and withdraw the device, cause of cramps and heavier menstrual bleeding, etc but there is no study that states that it affects fertility or increase risk of pelvic infection.



Myth 10

All New Mothers Adjust To Motherhood Naturally:

False. Each newborn baby is different, so every new mother is trying her best to adjust to a new phase of the life with her child even if she has had children earlier. The initial weeks bring many new learnings for both while trying to adjust to one another. It is important to remember that this may not happen automatically. The mother's body goes through a range of changes during the pregnancy and

childbirth. Post-partum mothers need professional advice to guide them. The Obstetric/Gynaecologist will schedule a visit within 4-8 weeks of childbirth. A complete physical examination is done to make sure that the uterus, pelvis or the incisions are in good order. You will also undergo a cervical cancer screening. The consultation is likely to include family planning and appropriate birth control methods post-partum. All this goes to ensure that the new mother is well-adjusted in her role while feeling her best mentally and physically.



MY JOURNEY AT ABHA SURGY CENTRE



BULBUL BOSE
Doctor's Assistant

A Note by Bulbul Bose

My Journey at Abha Surgury Centre: A Note from Bulbul Bose

Hello! I'm Bulbul Bose, and for the past two years, I've had the privilege of being a Doctor's Assistant at Abha Surgury Centre. Every day, I step into this clinic knowing that I'm part of something much bigger—a place where lives are transformed, families are built, and dreams of parenthood come true. It's more than just a job; it's a journey filled with compassion, hope, and immense responsibility. Whether it's patients from all across India—Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Tripura—or our neighbors from Nepal and Bangladesh, each story has left a lasting impression on my heart.

A Moment to Cherish: The Gift of Life

Some moments in life stay with you forever, and for me, one such moment was witnessing a couple

from Bihar find joy again. They had endured unimaginable heartbreak, having lost two children in a tragic accident. When they walked into Abha Surgury Centre seeking IVF treatment, they carried with them the weight of grief, but also a flicker of hope. From the very first day, I stood by their side, witnessing their quiet strength and determination to rebuild what they had lost.

The day their IVF procedure succeeded, and they welcomed their healthy baby into the world, the look on their faces was nothing short of pure, unfiltered joy. Tears filled their eyes as they held their newborn, and in that moment, it felt like the world stopped. I will never forget the overwhelming emotion that filled the room. It was as if their hearts, broken from loss, had started beating anew. Moments like these remind me that what we do here is not just medical



work—it's the work of restoring hope and building families.

The Power of Trust: A Personal Reward

One of the most profound rewards I experience is when patients return or refer others because of the care they received. There's something so personal and fulfilling about hearing a patient mention my name during a consultation or praise the efforts of our doctors. It's more than recognition—it's a reminder that we're touching lives in ways that matter. It fuels my passion and drives me to give my all, knowing that each day, I'm helping people in some of their most vulnerable moments.

A Family at Work: Growing Together

Here at Abha Surgy, I'm surrounded by not just colleagues, but a second family. The doctors are remarkable in how they nurture strong bonds with patients, always addressing even the smallest concerns. They extend that same care to us, the

support staff, and involve us deeply in their mission. What truly stands out is how much we learn from each other. Every month, when our doctors return from seminars across India or abroad, they share their insights and experiences, ensuring that we're always at the forefront of advanced treatments. This shared learning helps us grow, not just professionally but also as compassionate caregivers.

A Journey with Deep Meaning

Every day at Abha Surgy Centre is filled with purpose. Whether I'm helping a couple experience the joy of becoming parents for the first time or providing reassurance to someone going through a tough time, I know that my role matters. I am deeply grateful to be part of a place that brings hope and healing to so many. My journey here has been one of growth, learning, and countless moments of joy. I hope to continue serving our patients with the utmost care, compassion, and dedication. Here's to many more years of spreading smiles, offering comfort, and helping dreams come true!



DIET AND EXERCISE FOR WOMEN'S GOOD HEALTH

For most women, the To-Do list on any given day spills over a single page and on to the next. Every day, there are just too many things, personal, and often professional, that need to be done. Given the fact that most women subconsciously wish for their work to be flawless all the time, they go through a never-ending cycle of self-imposed perfectionism. That does not leave much time for regular workouts and proper nutrition, does it? However, the benefits of a nutritious diet and regular exercise go a long way in ensuring good women's health for a lifetime. A report published by the National Library of Medicine states, evidence demonstrates that the combination of healthy nutrient intake and regular physical exercise is a powerful lifestyle strategy that modulates lifelong health through its ability to improve body composition, sex-steroid hormones, physical performance and prevent chronic diseases across the lifespan of a woman.

As a woman's body goes through several changes from menarche to menopause and beyond, nutritional requirements and exercise regimes need to evolve accordingly. What works for an adolescent girl would not be suitable for an elderly woman. For instance, post menopause when the body stops producing sex steroid hormones like estrogen and progesterone, there is an accelerated pace of bone and muscle mass loss and body strength. Consequently, nutritional requirements and training needs are worked out differently for women above 45.

In this article, we look at the broad categories of an adult woman's lifecycle and discuss her dietary requirements and exercise briefly.

Adolescent and Teen: Healthy eating throughout the lifetime should be taught at a young age. When a young girl builds healthy food choices into her lifestyle, she takes early steps to remain fit and healthy life long and keeps a host of diseases at bay. Initially requiring adult supervision and motivation, it can soon transform into a regular habit as she takes the right amounts of calories herself. A report in **Healthline** clearly indicates that for females, eating well between their childhood and adulthood is especially important for a variety of reasons. A girl's adolescent and teenage years are a phase of active growth spurt, bone and muscle development, and fast maturation of the body including the female reproductive system. Consequently, it needs a steady supply of nutrients to grow normally. The various changes of the body need to be supported adequately by healthy nutritional choices. The right amount of iron, calcium, zinc, vitamins, and other minerals should be a regular part of the young girl's diet.

This is the time to go all out on physical activity. She does not have to go only to the gym, swimming or yoga class to get her quota of exercise. Encourage her to experiment with fun activities like outdoor team sports, bicycling, or different forms of dancing - depending on where you live.



Adult: For every adult woman, physical activity and diet are essential for maintaining good health and preventing the development of several diseases. The relationship between nutrition and health is important as it ensures that she keeps performing her personal and professional roles optimally during the most productive phase of her life. Unfortunately, in the midst of their responsibilities, most adult women tend to experience deficiencies in nutrition and micronutrient quotas as they keep prioritising their families and other's needs ahead of themselves. These deficiencies can go on to affect aspects of their lifestyle, such as general quality of life and sleep patterns, and in the long term, can bring on the risk of developing chronic diseases, including lifestyle diseases. Physical activity of any adult woman must be associated with a balanced energy intake and the choice of the right foods to achieve the expected results and preserve health. She should aim to eat healthy food from each food group in correct amounts for her body. She should cut back on excess sugar, salt, trans, and saturated fats, and get your quota of vitamins and minerals from food sources rather than taking supplements. Focusing on the choices she can make regarding healthy eating and taking small steps at a time will help in the long run.

Adult women should aim at some sort of aerobic exercise every day. Walking, swimming, yoga, dancing, cycling, tennis and badminton are great ways of getting some physical exercise daily. Weight-bearing and muscle-training exercises work for most. Remember to build in a regular medical checkup to keep yourself at your peak through adulthood.

Pregnant and Lactating: The nutritional needs and requirements of a woman's body during pregnancy and lactation are quite different from others as she is directly responsible not only for her own body and wellbeing but also for her

child's. Healthy eating during pregnancy includes proteins in the form of lean meats, chicken, fish, and eggs, seafood, bean and lentil, soya and tofu, dry fruits and nuts, healthy oils like vegetable oil, olive oil, and oils in foods like seafood, avocado, and nuts. Encourage lactating women to follow dietary guidelines that have a generous amount of nutrients from a range of fresh fruits and vegetables, cereals and whole grains, dairy produce that is rich in calcium, protein-rich foods such as legumes, soya, meats and fish.

Non-weight bearing exercises can be done all through pregnancy and during lactation without fear of hampering breast-feeding. Walking, swimming, belly breathing, specific yoga asanas, low impact aerobics are recommended during this phase. Seek guidance from your gynaecologist regarding your specific case on regimen and precautions.

Menopausal: As the body undergoes a series of changes with menopause, it is important not to slip up on dietary requirements and exercise during this phase. With the natural drop of reproductive hormones, the body's aging process sets in. Over 80% of menopausal women go through a range of uncomfortable symptoms as hot flashes and night sweats, mood swings accompanied by unexplained impatience and irritability, fatigue, body aches, and patchy sleep patterns. Nutrition and fitness choices can ease a woman's body during menopause. Increased protein and calcium intake are recommended by specialists. It is important to maintain the body's lean muscle mass and preserve bone and brain health. A variety of foods such as eggs, lean red meat, poultry, fish and vegetable sources of protein like beans, soya, pulses, and nuts are sources of protein that she should aim to include in her diet.

The right combination of strength training and eating good-quality protein will support the body in building new muscle and retaining the current



muscle mass. Aerobic, weight-training, and low-impact exercises may benefit in several ways while slowing down loss of bone density and boosting the mood, removing anxiety, and improving sleep. Your medical specialist will guide you on what works best for your body.

Elderly: Older women can maintain a healthy and active lifestyle and avoid or satisfactorily manage several age-related health concerns with a good diet and exercise routine. The beneficial role of regular physical activity and structured exercise in health of older adults has been mentioned by the World Health Organization. These women should ensure intake of nutritious meals through the day. A healthy breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and nourishing snack portions at different times of the day will help them maintain their energy levels and adequately motivated. The diet should include foods with lean proteins, healthy carbs and fats, whole grains and plenty of vegetables. A senior's meal, whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian should include foods that are less spicy and nutrient-dense, packed with adequate proteins, healthy carbs and fats, minerals and vitamins. Healthy snack options for elderly women include yoghurt, dry fruits and nuts, hummus, whole-grain small-sized bites, and seasonal fruits. They should aim to keep themselves as hydrated as possible and refuse sweetened and carbonated beverages.

Elderly women can incorporate specific yoga asanas, balance and flexibility exercises, strength training, aerobic exercises like walking into their daily routines. It is a good idea to consult the General Physician for a customised regimen to follow according to your body's condition.

Finally, summing it up for women of all ages - A well-balanced diet packed with the right nutrients taken in portion sizes suitable to your age, activity, and body type, along with the right kind of physical activity will go a long way in keeping your weight in check and several chronic diseases away throughout your life. This enables you to keep performing your roles, no matter what your age and feeling good about yourself. Most Indian traditional food plans are exceptionally well-balanced with the right amount of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Indian traditional spices and herbs commonly used in our kitchens like green chillies, turmeric, pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, fenugreek, coriander, basil, and others are extremely healthy taken in the right way.

While you are busy ticking off your To-do list, remember what flight instructions say about dealing with an emergency – you need to cover your face with the mask first before you turn to help your loved ones.



MANAGING MENSTRUATION WITH AWARENESS, HYGIENE AND DIGNITY

LET'S BUST MYTHS AND NORMALISE IT FOR ADOLESCENT AND TEENAGE GIRLS

In India, it is a sad truth that even today menstruation and menstrual practices are bound by several socio-cultural restrictions and remain entrenched in stigmas and taboos. Adolescent and teenage girls, especially in backward societies, are kept in the dark about one of the most natural processes of the female reproductive body. Millions of young girls experience a miserable cycle of confusion, poor hygiene, discomfort, pain, isolation and shame when they go through their monthly periods due to lack of awareness. By remaining ignorant of the scientific facts about menstruation and failing to imbibe the basic hygiene practices during one's period often leads to an adverse outcome whereby the health of the young girl is badly affected.

More than one study has revealed that when menarche (onset of menstruation) arrives suddenly with the girl having sketchy or no knowledge of how to deal with it, she can be terrified and even traumatized about the changes in her body. A UNICEF study in recent years revealed that one in three girls in South Asia had zero knowledge of menstruation before their first period, and 48% of girls in Iran thought they were suffering from some terrible disease when they started menstruating for the first time.

We believe the time has come to normalise menstruation, to discuss it in schools and families without tiptoeing around the subject, and to do away with age-old social norms and practices that have no scientific basis or relevance in today's world. Let's empower our young girls across social strata so they can be happy & healthy citizens of tomorrow, ready to unfurl their wings and fly high.

Menstruation is NOT a dirty or impure process: In many parts of India, monthly periods are considered dirty and impure due to cultural and social conditioning. In many faiths, a menstruating woman is considered impure and must go through a "process of purification" before she can fully resume her household duties. There is nothing dirty or impure about menstruation. It is the normal cycle of shedding of endometrial vessels from the endometrial lining of the uterus, which builds up each month for a reproductively-active adult woman, when the ovum(s) released by her ovaries is not fertilised. There can be a mild odour, but that's necessarily not an indication of some infection. Though it differs from regular blood in some respects but is not impure or dirty in any way.



You do NOT become weaker due to loss of blood during menstruation: As mentioned earlier, it is a natural part of the female reproductive cycle during which a woman bleeds. Menstruation starts in girls usually between the ages of 11- 14 and is one of the indicators marking the onset of puberty. Menstrual blood shedding does not make a girl or woman weaker. Some may feel a little extra tired, moody, less-motivated, and less active. This might be due to the normal female hormone fluctuations that occur but a menstruating woman does not become potentially less strong or less able when she is having her monthly period.



If you are already into active sports and workout, you need NOT pause your schedule during menstruation: The simple advice for young girls is to carry on with the usual routine. When she is menstruating, she need not stop her normal training. However, it is a good idea to remain cautious. According to one study, 60 minutes of moderate to intense exerciseduringmenstruationcaused exercise-induced inflammation in some girls. If she feels unusually off, or nauseous, or there is greater discomfort and pain, it is best to stop and give the body rest. This, for that matter, should be the rule for other days of the month as well.

You do NOT stop taking a bath or washing your hair during your monthly period: It is important for every menstruating woman to keep herself physically clean and dry. It has clear benefits on uplifting the mood, other than keeping germs at bay. In fact,



a warm bath and rest can help ease the painful cramps. A common belief in many parts of India states washing hair during periods leads to a halt of blood flow, or that the girl is prone to cold and fever during her monthly periods, so baths, especially with cold water should not be allowed. There is no scientific basis or study that shows that not bathing or washing the hair is required during menstruation.

Sanitary products need NOT be kept hidden securely from others: Treat sanitary products as items of personal use. A young girl does not need to keep her sanitary pads or tampons locked up and hidden from everyone's view at all times. They need not be bundled in newspaper when buying from stores. There is no need to feel awkward or ashamed if her father, brother or a male friend sees them in her bag or cupboard. Usage of cloth can cause infection so sanitary pads must be used. They are normal personal hygiene products and should be treated similarly.

It is high time to challenge misconceptions and bust myths around menstruation. One easy way to do this is by fostering open and frank conversations in homes and schools, and promoting education and awareness. Breaking taboos and doing away with stigmas around menstruation will pave the way for a more inclusive and supportive society for adolescent and teenage girls where they move about with confidence.



FESTIVE CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Durga Puja, Laxmi Puja, and Diwali are joyous festivals celebrated with great enthusiasm in Kolkata. However, for pregnant women, the bustling crowds, late-night pandal hopping, fasting, and indulgent eating can pose specific challenges. Here's trimester-specific advice to help you enjoy the festivities while keeping your health and the baby's well-being in mind.

1st Trimester (0-13 weeks)

This period is critical for the baby's development and often marked by fatigue, nausea, and food aversions. The risk of miscarriage is also higher.

Key Advice

Avoid Fasting: Fasting can lead to dizziness, nausea, and dehydration. If religious fasting is unavoidable, opt for small, frequent meals like fruits, nuts, and milk instead of completely skipping meals.

Avoid Overcrowded Places: The immune system is weaker during early pregnancy, making you more susceptible to infections. Long hours of standing

in pandals, especially in crowds, can also cause unnecessary fatigue.

Hydration: Kolkata's humid weather during puja season can cause dehydration. Carry water or coconut water while you're out.

Example: If you're planning to visit pandals, do it during early morning hours when the crowd is thin, and make sure to take frequent sitting breaks.



2nd Trimester (14-27 weeks)

This is often considered the most comfortable period of pregnancy. However, long hours of activity and improper diet can still pose risks.

Key Advice:

Balanced Diet: Avoid binge eating on fried snacks and sweets. Excess consumption of sweets can elevate blood sugar levels, which is risky for gestational diabetes. Try eating light snacks such as grilled items or homemade sweets with less sugar.

Limit Pandal Hopping: It's essential to rest every hour and avoid standing for prolonged





periods. Long traffic jams can add to stress, so plan visits during off-peak hours.

Comfortable Clothing: Kolkata weather during puja season can be unpredictable. Wear light, breathable, and loose clothing to avoid overheating and discomfort.



Example: If you're attending family gatherings, choose a comfortable chair with back support. Carry some healthy snacks like fruits or dry fruits to avoid the temptation of fried food.

3rd Trimester (28-40 weeks)

By this stage, you may experience more fatigue, difficulty walking, and backaches. It's vital to minimize stress and physical strain.

Key Advice

Avoid Prolonged Standing: Standing for long periods in queues or crowds can cause swelling in the legs and feet. Carry a portable chair or stool if you plan to spend time in pandals.

Stay Near Medical Help: With delivery dates approaching, avoid going too far

from your regular hospital or doctor. Always carry your medical records and contact information in case of emergencies.

Small, Frequent Meals: Avoid large meals as they can cause indigestion or heartburn. Stick to smaller, more frequent meals that are rich in protein and fiber to maintain energy levels.

Example: If you're visiting family during Diwali, avoid heavy meals at night as this may lead to heartburn. Choose light, healthy options such as salads or yogurt-based dishes.

General Tips for All Trimesters

Rest When Needed: Listen to your body. Overexertion can lead to complications, especially if you're on your feet for long hours.



In conclusion, while puja season is a time of celebration, it's crucial for pregnant women to balance enjoyment with proper self-care. By following these guidelines, you can ensure a healthy and stress-free pregnancy while being part of the festivities.

