

Overcoming the Challenges of Motherhood



Dr. Vorachai Cheunchompoonut

It's the moment every mother has been waiting for, after nine long arduous months an expectant mom finally has the chance to cradle her newborn child. During this process a series of questions, challenges and dilemmas can repeatedly pop up in a mother's mind.

The more a mother knows what to expect she will be better equipped to handle the physical and emotional challenges that come before and after pregnancy.

With over 14 years of experience as a gynaecologist Dr. Vorachai Cheunchompoonut of BNH Hospital discusses some of the mind-boggling questions mothers have and offers some advice every mother would be glad to take.

"Delivering a baby is like giving the patient a present," Dr. Vorachai says.

Surely every mom would like to take good care of her newborn and make sure it is well nurtured, however coming to terms with her new role might pose challenges and raise questions.

"Normally most mothers are concerned about the baby and themselves, some mothers don't know if the baby is healthy enough or strong enough and new moms come up with many questions, I answer their questions and advise them to modify their lifestyle and eat a healthy diet," says Dr. Vorachai.

Some of the most common problems that occur after delivery include pain,

bleeding and infections, which could cause a potential problem to some mothers; nevertheless they can be controlled.

Dr. Vorachai also mentions other challenges which include taking proper care of the baby especially if it is the mother's first child, some mothers might not know how to clean, carry and breast feed the baby. However, those challenges might be trivial compared to other problems like postpartum blue, which occurs in 30 to 50 percent of mothers.

Postpartum blue has a variety of symptoms, which could include a lack of interest in the baby, difficulty sleeping, and prolonged period of sadness or crying. Postpartum blue is usually triggered by hormonal changes, some mothers might have to put up with it for weeks or even months, despite that not all mothers suffer from postpartum problems says Dr. Vorachai.

"Normally this depends on the mother's mental status before she delivers the baby, if she has a calm character she might not get postpartum problems but if she is anxious she might get it" he says.

Postpartum problems could particularly occur in single families especially if the mother does not have anyone to assist her with the new baby. Dr. Vorachai advises the whole family to lend a hand of support to the parents; a mother also

has to have a proper sleep pattern he advises.

"Some mothers try to take good care of the baby all the time without paying attention to their sleep. I suggest that whenever the baby goes to bed she goes to bed as well," Dr. Vorachai says.

Mothers might also enquire about the best way to feed their babies, in which comes the challenge of choosing between breast milk and formula brands. Dr. Vorachai says the mother's own milk is healthy, clean and contains immunoglobulin which is good for the baby and it is cheaper than buying formula milk brands. He also believes it is good for mother-child bonding.

"In some cases the amount of breastmilk is not enough for the baby, if this happens and the baby is crying because he/she isn't getting enough milk, then mothers can switch to formula brands," he says.

Just as it is important for the child to get proper nutrition it is equally important for the mom to make sure she gets the proper nutrients needed for a healthy balanced diet.

Dr. Vorachai advises mothers to follow the same diet pattern while they were pregnant but to watch out for drugs and food that could pass through breast milk. He encourages mothers to increase their calorie intake by 10 to 15 percent and increase their intake of calcium, proteins, and multivitamins.

Last but not least comes the crucial stage every mother might be anxious about, namely the moment before delivery. How can she best prepare for this phase? Dr. Vorachai advises anxious moms to take the intensive guidance course offered at BNH or other hospitals. Such courses prepare moms for pre-pregnancy procedures, the course teaches mothers how to manage labour pain, how to get into the operating theatre and offers them tips on how to calm down before delivery.

As an obstetrician Dr. Vorachai guides moms to look out for the symptoms prior to delivery which include contractions, bleeding or broken waters. He also believes it is important for mothers to discuss their birth options with their doctor prior to delivery.

"In some cases mothers cannot deliver naturally if the pelvis is too small or if the baby is too huge, the doctor can then advice on the best mode of delivery," he says. After the baby is delivered Dr. Vorachai advises moms to get their body back into shape by breast-feeding and continuing with their normal daily activities.

In order to get back their skin's firmness Dr. Vorachai recommends moms to eat food that promote collagen production and follow a diet with a high vitamin C and antioxidant intake, abdominal exercises are also of great use.

- David Messiha