

Becoming a late baby “bloomer”



MATURE mothers-to-be have become quite the norm in the past decade. In fact, according to data from Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, the number of babies born to mothers aged 40 and above last year was 1,295 out of a total of 39,654, or 3.3 per cent in Singapore. This has been a consistent figure over the last ten years.

However, it is important for potential mature mothers-to-be to be mindful of some tips to ensure a smooth pregnancy.

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First and foremost, it may take longer for women over 40 to conceive so they should “get started” as soon as possible. The longer you leave it, the lower the chance of conceiving. Other things being equal, the chance of having a problem with fertility increases from about 11 percent in your early 20s to about 33 percent in your late 30s to almost 40 percent in your early 40s.

Older women are more likely to have existing chronic medical problems (such as diabetes or high blood pressure) which may present as the pregnancy advances.

The potential older mum should maintain a healthy lifestyle and stop alcohol and smoking. This includes avoiding the inhalation of passive smoke. Pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure must be treated optimally as uncontrolled disease increases the risk of miscarriage and an abnormally formed baby. It will certainly help for women over 40 to ensure that they are in good general health before embarking on pregnancy.

There should also be an adequate intake of folic acid and calcium supplements. Folic acid reduces the risk of neural tube defects in the baby while calcium is important for bones.

Pregnancies that are conceived over 40 tend to be at higher risk of miscarriage and Down syndrome. Older women are more likely to have existing chronic medical problems (such as diabetes or high blood pressure) which may present as the pregnancy advances. Hence, in advanced pregnancies, it is pertinent that women over 40 attend regular antenatal visits.

Screening tests for the detection of Down syndrome are available. These tests are done between 11 - 14 weeks pregnancy that may identify up to 90 per cent of Down's syndrome babies. Do check with your doctor thoroughly about these screening tests.

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