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Volume 01 | Issue 02 | May 2024

# HEALTH SHOTS

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## 10 'Everyday' Routines Affecting...

...your fertility! What are they,  
and how do they impact your  
reproductive health?

### To Test or Not To Test

Are all those tests and  
scans really necessary?





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# Editor's Note



## Dear Readers,

I hope you all had a wonderful Mother's Day! As the years go by, the occasion is becoming more and more prominent, with everyone thinking up new ways to express their appreciation to their mothers. Of course, some may question whether we need *one* specific day to appreciate our mothers or whether this appreciation should be felt (even if it is not expressed openly) round the year.

Mother's Day brings back a lot of memories for me. As an obstetrician, I have a 'frontline seat' to the first moment when a woman becomes a mother. It is truly a life-changing moment, and no matter how many babies I have delivered, it is always special and unique in its own way. Becoming a mother is as much a physiological change as it is an emotional one - and it is definitely one that is to be cherished.

Becoming and being a mother is no easy task. Given the intensity of the physical and emotional demands of giving birth and then breastfeeding post birth, a mother requires the full support of her partner and family members. This is essential to help her care for the baby - and herself.

And it is heartening to see that partners are stepping up in full! Fathers-to-be are equally involved in preparing for the birth, and caring for the baby post-delivery. They attend the ante-natal classes (with the mothers-to-be) regularly, support the mothers during the delivery, and follow the guidelines for lactation and breastfeeding religiously. With all of this, the traditional lines are blurring, and both men and women are becoming nurturing, caring parents.

This, I believe, is truly worth celebrating!

P.S: We hope you enjoyed the first issue of *Health Shots*. Many of you have shared your thoughts in person or via messages, and we are taking up your suggestions to make this magazine a forum that is best for you! Keep sending your feedback, suggestions and questions to [info@bloomhealthcare.in](mailto:info@bloomhealthcare.in).

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# Digital Dilemmas



**Dr. A. Koushik Mathivanan**  
Consultant – Paediatrics

*When it comes to introducing digital devices, and regulating screen time for children, parents are often confused as to where they should draw the line. Here are some guidelines that can help.*

In today's world, the use of digital devices is the order of the day. There is little we can do remove these devices from our lives, but we can work on maintaining a balance between screen time (the total time spent per day in viewing screens such as mobile phones, TVs, computers, tablets, or any hand-held or visual devices) and other activities. This balance is particularly important for young children, as they are not capable of drawing boundaries in terms of exposure and usage.

Just as parents put in efforts to ensure that their child eats a balanced meal, screens need to be properly chosen and consumed in the right manner. The way we use the visual devices determines whether it is healthy or unhealthy. For instance, screen time spent for educational or social activities such as schoolwork, interacting with friends and relatives, creating art or music or relaxation may be positive or healthy, while watching inappropriate TV shows, playing violent video games, or spending too much time on social media may have negative or unhealthy side-effects.

So, why is this balance so important? Because excessive screen time can have multiple ill effects on children:

**Physical health:** Obesity, sedentary lifestyle, disturbed sleep, headache, eye strain, neck, back, and wrist pain

**Mental health:** Delayed speech, hyperactivity, aggression, desire for instant gratification, poor concentration, FOMO (fear of missing out), FOBLO (fear of being left out), media addiction, and anxiety.

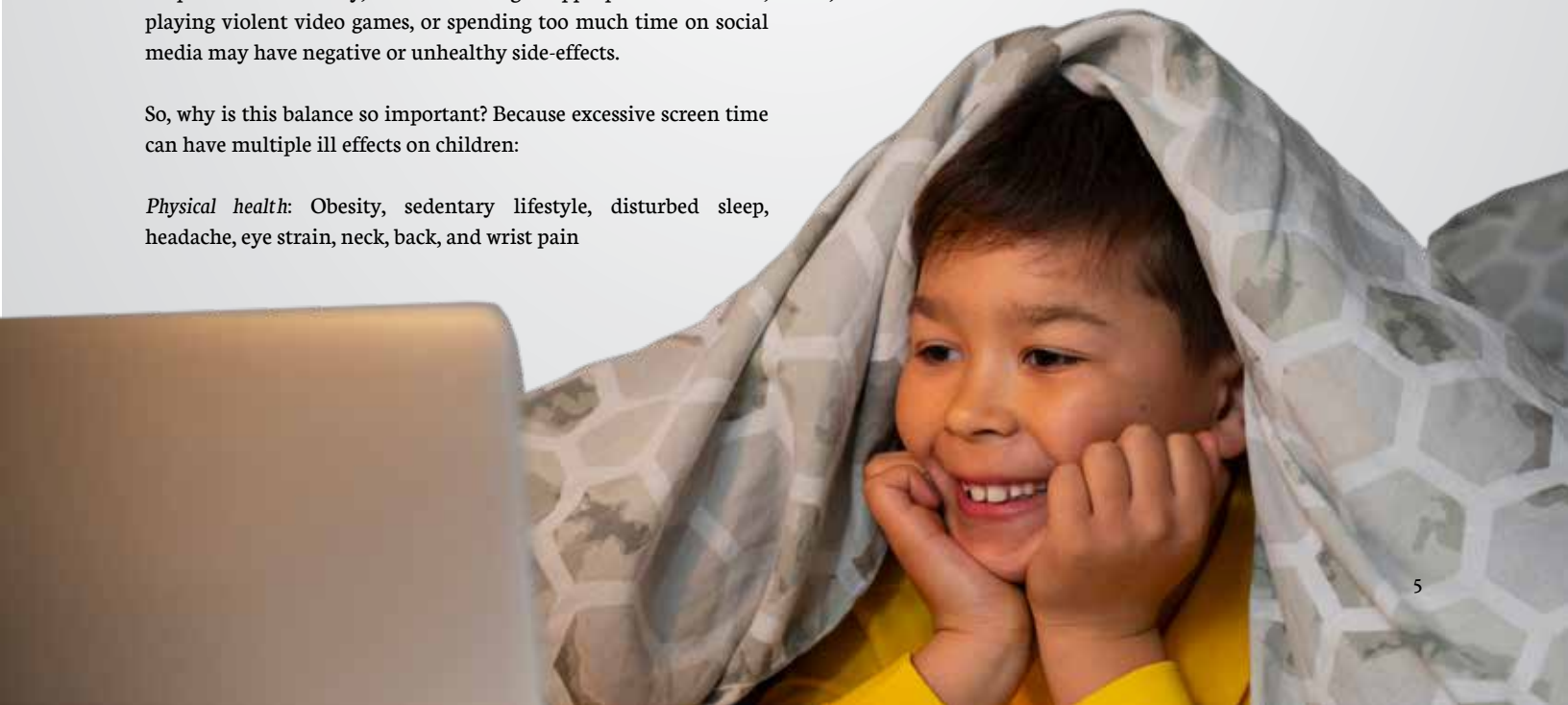
**Social:** Reduced socialisation and social anxiety.

**Scholastic:** Decreased academic performance.

So, what are some guidelines we can follow to ensure healthy screen time for our children?

For one, children **below the age of 2 years** should not be exposed to any type of screens with the exception of the occasional video call with relatives. In particular, handing over a phone or tablet to quieten them down and eat their food without fussing must be avoided. Screen time for children between the **age of 2 and 5 years** should not exceed 1 hour – the lesser, the better. It should also not become a mandatory part of a child's day. On some days, keep the phone away and get them to engage in play or other activities.

For **older children and adolescents**, it is important to balance screen time with other activities that are required for overall development. These activities include an hour of physical activity (play time), adequate sleep, and time for schoolwork, meals, hobbies, and family time. If any of these activities is displaced due to screen use, it should be reduced. ♦



# Motherhood

## A Collective Responsibility

*Traditionally, motherhood has been associated with pregnancy and childbirth, but is this truly where motherhood begins? Not really. Becoming a mother isn't just about gaining a label or title – it's a profound emotional and personal transformation that extends beyond the moment of birth.*



**Dr. Jayashree Jayakrishnan PT**  
Clinical Physiotherapist in Women's Health &  
International Board Certified Lactation Consultant

**M**otherhood is a journey that a woman embarks on when she forms a relationship with her baby, transcending mere biological processes. The experience of pregnancy and birth marks a profound transition in a woman's life, where the responsibility for the holistic development of another being rests solely upon her.

Throughout the nine months of this journey, the pregnant mother is accompanied by a constant presence, observing her every emotion, thought, like and dislike. When she finally meets this 'person' face to face, after birth, the moment is beyond all emotions when the mother says, "You are the one we've been eagerly anticipating!"

As a woman transitions into motherhood, she needs not just personal support but also community understanding and empathy to navigate this transformative phase of her life.

### **Not Just a 'Natural' Process**

Breastfeeding, post-partum recovery and caring for the newborn – all of this is often bundled together and described as a 'natural' process, yet many are unaware that aligning thoughts with actions can be challenging. As a new mother (regardless of the mode



of delivery), the woman needs assistance in terms of mobility, access to the child, nutritious meals, someone who anticipates their needs, and a non-judgemental attitude towards their choices.

Moreover, post-partum support is not just about the first few months after childbirth – it's about nurturing the baby and mother over the long term. Hormonal changes and adjustment to motherhood require ongoing emotional and physical support. Planning for an extended period (perhaps three years), can help ensure that both the mother and child receive the care they need as they grow and develop.

This is where the family and community's support become crucial. In particular, partners play a pivotal role in this journey.

**Partner's Support:** In today's world, where many women are balancing work and personal life, achieving a good balance is often a hard task. Hence, planning for maternal and paternal leave should be a joint decision, ensuring that both parents are equally involved in the early stages of parenthood. Understanding the needs of the newborn and supporting each other in daily chores, including night feeds, fosters a strong foundation for the family.

**Familial Involvement:** Family support plays a crucial role in a smooth transition to motherhood. It's essential to bridge the gap between traditional experience and modern knowledge. Grandparents, relatives and even older siblings can contribute positively by understanding how they can play a supportive role by adapting new parenting methods. This inclusive approach ensures a conducive environment for the mother and child's well-being.

**Community Support:** Communities need to support mothers by providing comfort and facilities that enable them to balance motherhood with other aspects of life. Offering maternity feeding breaks and creche facilities at workplaces, and ensuring that motherhood doesn't hinder career progression are essential steps. It's crucial to utilise legal provisions and government support to create a supportive environment for mothers in the community.

**Personal Health and Fitness:** While many associate pregnancy fitness predominantly with women and its relevance to labour, it goes well beyond that. If a woman doesn't attain full fitness by enhancing her strength and endurance, she may face challenges during the post-childbirth period while caring for her baby. Moreover, this responsibility only grows over time, requiring more core strength and stamina. Therefore, all pregnant women, including those at high risk due to medical conditions, can individually work on their fitness levels, facilitating better recovery regardless of the mode of delivery during the immediate post-partum period. Moreover, ongoing fitness efforts should be encouraged as responsibilities increase.

Motherhood is a journey that goes beyond the physical act of giving birth – it's about nurturing and shaping lives with love, care, and support. Moreover, it transcends gender, and cannot be viewed as the sole responsibility of women. By preparing our communities to embrace and empower mothers, we can ensure that every woman embarks on this journey with confidence and resilience. Let's work together to create a community where motherhood is celebrated, supported, and cherished every day. ♦



## *Fostering Joy in Motherhood*

At BloomLife Hospital, we are committed to helping families experience a smooth journey from pregnancy to motherhood and beyond. A testament to this commitment is our distinction as the first private hospital nationally to attain the Breastfeeding Friendly Hospital Accreditation. Furthermore, to support this pledge, we have established a specialised Lactation Management Department, complete with an Outpatient Lactation Management Clinic. We also offer lactation management admissions for the first time within our facility.



# Beyond the Obvious

## Lesser-known signs of a heart attack



**Dr. Aiswarya Nair**  
Consultant - General Medicine  
BloomLife Hospital

***Pain or discomfort in the chest area. Central chest pain radiating to the shoulder. Unexplained pain in the left shoulder. We all know these tell-tale signs of a heart attack, but what about some other, lesser-known signs? Read on to know more.***

**M**ention the word ‘heart attack’ and we imagine a person clutching their heart, saying they are experiencing severe pain. The feeling of ‘pain’ can take on multiple forms - squeezing, tightness, pressure, constriction, crushing, burning, heartburn, fullness in the chest, a band-like sensation, a knot in the centre of the chest, a lump in the throat, ache, a heavy weight on the chest (feeling like an elephant sitting is on the chest), feeling like a bra is stretched too tight, or a toothache (when there is radiation to the lower jaw).

This form of pain, which can radiate from the central area to the shoulder or left shoulder, jaw or neck, is a commonly known sign of a heart attack (also known as ‘myocardial infarction’) - which we attend to immediately. However, there are a range of other indications as well, which may not be accompanied by pain or similar symptoms. Oftentimes, we tend to ignore these signs - and this may prove to be dangerous in the long run. What are these signs?

Sudden onset of **breathlessness or shortness of breath**, without any specific cause (such as physical exertion), with or without chest discomfort.

Unusual **fatigue or weakness**, despite having sufficient rest, even if it is not accompanied by chest pain or discomfort.

Onset of frequent episodes of **digestive issues**, such as nausea, vomiting or indigestion, with no specific cause in sight.

**Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back** - be it sudden or frequent episodes.

Sudden onset of **dizziness or lightheadedness**, especially when standing up suddenly. It may or may not be accompanied by chest discomfort.

Sudden breakout of **cold sweats, clammy skin, or onset of extreme anxiety**.

In particular, a person with a history of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels or any other health issues, is more vulnerable to experiencing one or more of the above-mentioned symptoms, particularly without the sensation of pain or discomfort.

Of course, not every sign is necessarily the harbinger of a heart attack - and the doctor may advise an ECG and some other tests, prior to making a diagnosis. However, knowing the signs and paying attention can help us address possible health issues at the earliest - and keep up our well-being. ♦





# To Test or Not to Test

*Your questions about why things happen the way they do in a hospital – answered.*

**Anita Krishnaswamy**  
CEO - BloomLife Hospital

## Why does a doctor ask me to take so many tests?

This is a question many people have asked. Be it something as simple as a headache, fever or stomach ache, or something that seems more complicated, a set of tests and scans seem to be a mandate for most doctors. Are they really necessary? Why can't the doctor simply prescribe some medicine or treatment option after examining the person?

The answer to these questions lies in the make-up of the human body. It is one of the most complicated creations of nature – with so many interconnected aspects that function as one harmonious whole. In all of this, symptoms and corresponding body parts are not always connected in a straight line. In many cases, more than one cause may give rise to the symptoms. Diagnosing the cause is thus the crucial first step in the treatment protocol.

When a doctor is presented with a set of symptoms, he/she has to comb through several possible causes that could have led to these symptoms in the first place. This includes examining the person's case history as well, and then ruling out some of the causes that may

not align with it. Each person comes with a unique physiological set-up, and a similar set of symptoms might be traced to different causes in different people.

Even if the doctor is very experienced and is able to intuitively figure out the cause, they need more data to validate their diagnosis, and more importantly, the extent of the problem they are dealing with. Tests and scans provide this data – which then helps the doctor decide on a suitable diagnosis. Ultimately, the doctor's mission is to alleviate your pain and discomfort, and restore you to good health at the earliest – and tests and scans are a tool they use to help them achieve this.

As a patient, please make it a point to ask your doctor about the tests they are prescribing. An open conversation will help you gain an understanding of the treatment methodology, give you greater clarity on the best way to get to good health, and increase your trust in the doctor. All of which, in my opinion, are a win-win! ♦



# 10

## 'Everyday' routines that are affecting your fertility



**Dr. Kavitha Gautham**

Senior Consultant - Reproductive Medicine & High Risk Obstetrics  
BloomLife Hospital



**Dr. Aravind Ravichandran**

Consultant - Reproductive Medicine & Fertility  
BloomLife Hospital

*Working with your laptop on your lap? Not drinking enough water? Staying indoors a lot? Did you know that all this can affect your fertility? Read on to know why.*

One of the ways in which our body maintains the functioning of different organs is through the secretion of hormones. Simply put, hormones are chemical messengers that 'control' our mental and physical health. Among them, certain hormones play an important part role in sustaining our fertility. When these hormones are affected or disturbed, it may affect our fertility as well. What can affect or disturb a person's hormonal levels? Apart from major illness, accidents or exposure to radiation on a large scale (eg. during treatment for cancer), there are some 'everyday' practices that may cause hormonal imbalance - and thereby impact fertility.



**1 Lack of sleep:** Late working hours, night shifts, prolonged exposure to blue screens and excessive stress can contribute to a lack of sleep - thereby upsetting the body's circadian rhythm, and disturbing its hormonal balance. a general guideline is to get at least seven hours of continuous, undisturbed sleep every night.

**2 Keeping the laptop on the lap:** Laptops emit a great deal of heat, and it may cause discolouration of the skin, rashes or even mild burns. More importantly, placing your laptop so close to your reproductive organs makes you vulnerable to electromagnetic radiation, which is produced both from the device itself and from its wireless communication capability. This form of radiation can affect fertility, particularly in terms of sperm motility.





**3 Lack of hydration:** Dehydration can lead to decreased sperm quality and less volume of semen in men, and poor egg health and less cervical mucus secretion (needed for transporting the sperm to the fallopian tubes) in women. The general guideline is to 1 litre of water per 20 kg of body weight.

**4 Insufficient or excessive exercise:** Lack of exercise has been shown to act as a catalyst for weight gain, and affect overall health and fertility. Excessive exercise is just as harmful, as it can reduce the person's body fat below healthy levels, put him / her on an energy deficit and thereby affect his / her fertility. A general guideline is about 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day - to be adjusted accordingly if the person is engaging in strenuous training once (or more) a week.



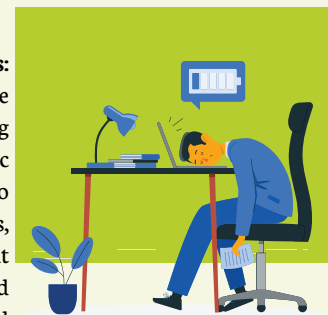
**5 Limited exposure to sunlight:** Did you know that exposure to sunlight is essential for our bodies to function properly? It helps the body to maintain production of melatonin, a hormone that is essential for our sleep-wake cycles. Studies also show that irregular production of melatonin can affect reproductive health, especially in women.

**6 Micronutrient deficiencies:** Micronutrients are nutritional elements like vitamins and minerals that the body requires in small doses on a daily basis to regulate essential functions. Studies have shown that insufficient intake of vitamins and minerals (especially the B-vitamin complex and Vitamin D) may affect both male and female fertility, and conception.



**7 Smoking and alcohol consumption:** Smoking has been linked with lower semen volume and total sperm count in men, and reduced egg quality and impaired reproductive health in women. Furthermore, heavy drinking is linked to negative impact on hormonal levels and impaired testicular function in men, and decreased fertility in women.

**8 Occupational hazards:** Work hazards range from exposure to strong chemicals, carcinogens, toxic agents and radiation, to uncomfortable work positions, excess stress and frequent changes between night and day shifts. Be it the physical or psychological aspect of our health, the impact can be serious and long-drawn - ranging from reduced egg and sperm quality to reduced libido.



**9 Excessive consumption of processed foods:** Consuming a lot of processed foods that are high in refined carbohydrates, sugar and trans-fats has been linked to lower fertility in both men and women. Apart from containing lower levels of essential nutrients, consuming too much of processed foods may lead to faster weight gain - both of which can affect a person's fertility.



**10 Excessive caffeine intake:** Consuming excess amounts of caffeine (more than 400 mg of caffeine / 4 cups of coffee a day) was found to affect sperm quality in men, and fertility levels and the ability to get pregnant in women. Also, too much caffeine may also lead of loss of quality sleep. (Be cautious: Caffeine is found in some carbonated drinks, teas and chocolate, and every bit adds up!)

The important thing to remember is that we retain a fair degree of control in all the aspects mentioned in this article. The first step to better health is to assess your environment and lifestyle, and make a shift towards more beneficial habits. ♦

# Wrist Woes

## Understanding and Managing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome



**Dr. R. Harun**  
Consultant – Orthopaedics  
BloomLife Hospital

*We delve into the symptoms, causes and treatment options for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, to better understand the condition and learn how to manage it effectively.*

In recent times, we are seeing a number of people talk about Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Around 0.1% to 10% of the population is affected by this condition, with a majority of them being in the age range of 40 to 60 years. In particular, women are more vulnerable to this condition.

### What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?

The condition may be described as common acquired compressive neuropathy of the median nerve. The carpal tunnel refers to a narrow passageway in the wrist through which the median nerve and tendons pass. When the median nerve, which runs from the brachial plexus (posterior region of the neck), through the arm, forearm and into the hand, becomes compressed at the wrist, it can give rise to pain, numbness, a tingling sensation in the thumb, forefinger and middle finger, and weakness in advanced stages. This condition is known as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (or CTS).

The common risk factors that contribute to Carpal Tunnel Syndrome include obesity, pregnancy, hypothyroidism, rheumatoid arthritis, previous incidents of trauma (distal radius fracture), chronic renal failure, menopause, use of oral contraceptives, space-occupying lesions, and diabetes, among others. Furthermore, repetitive movements involving the hand and wrist, such as typing, using a computer mouse, or operating machinery (over-active range of movements of the wrists) can give rise to this condition.

The real issue with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome lies in the symptoms – which can range from mild discomfort to severe pain, to the extent that it can interfere with daily activities. This would need immediate attention, and one may seek professional medical help as soon as the symptoms arise.

### Treatment for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The course of treatment would depend on the severity of symptoms and underlying causes. The person may be advised some oral medication, or to wear a splint or brace. They may also be advised to take breaks from activities that aggravate symptoms and avoiding repetitive hand movements, which can help reduce discomfort and prevent worsening of the condition. If the condition is severe or in an advanced stage, surgical intervention may be required. With the right treatment, the patient may see their pinch strength returning in 6 weeks, and their grip strength returning in 12 weeks.

As with all medical conditions, early intervention is critical. So, if you facing any symptoms that seem to indicate the possibility of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, consult an orthopaedician for an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan. With timely medical intervention, you can address the problem and gain the benefit of better health and improved quality of life. ♦





# What you need to know about PCOS



**Dr. Kavitha Gautham**

Senior Consultant - Reproductive Medicine  
& High Risk Obstetrics  
BloomLife Hospital

**T**he full form of PCOS is Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome, and it refers to the presence of several cysts around the ovaries. Cysts are small balloon-like structures that are filled with fluid. Because of the presence of these cysts, women with PCOS tend to have ovaries that look different in comparison to those who do not.

Broadly speaking, PCOS can be divided into two types. The first, which is 'Lean-type PCOS', is less common and arises due to genetic factors. The more commonly observed 'Obese-type PCOS' is largely a result of poor nutritional habits and lack of physical activity, which leads to excessive weight gain. This is the leading cause for this type of PCOS. When a young girl gains too much weight, and is not engaging in sufficient physical activity, the added fat in her body gets converted into testosterone (male hormone). Higher than normal levels of testosterone manifests in many forms - high cholesterol, excessive growth of facial hair, severe acne outbreaks and irregular period cycles. All of this may cause PCOS.

## Diagnosing PCOS

To diagnose whether a person has PCOS, we would have to look at three main factors. One, the person will be asked to take an ultrasound test, to look for the presence of ovarian cysts. Two, they will have to take some blood tests to check for hyper-androgenism (presence of excess testosterone). Three, we will check if they are clinically obese (i.e.) if their weight is much higher than the recommended weight range. Only after all three factors are looked into can we arrive at a conclusion about whether or not a person has PCOS.

## Common Misconceptions

One, a missed period, sudden weight gain or excessive facial hair does not automatically mean you have PCOS. You have to



***Sudden weight gain, eruption of acne, and growth of excessive facial hair – does this mean you have Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome or PCOS? Not necessarily. So, what is PCOS really? And does it affect fertility? Your questions, answered.***

consult a gynaecologist and get their advice on the tests, diagnosis and treatment.

Two, PCOS cannot be reversed, and there is no medical or surgical treatment to 'remove' it. However, you can definitely minimise the discomfort that arises from the symptoms. The best way to do so would be to adopt a healthy lifestyle - a diet catered to your nutritional needs, regular exercise, less stress and more happiness. Medication or hormone supplements may help to treat some symptoms but they should be taken only on the advice (and prescription) of a doctor.

## PCOS and Fertility

A common question that arises is whether women with PCOS can get pregnant and have children. Yes, they can. Medically speaking, we would categorise women (above the age of 21) with PCOS into four categories: Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Resistant. Women in the Mild category tend to get their period every 40 days or so. They usually do not experience difficulty in conceiving. Women in the Moderate and Severe categories tend to be on the heavier side, and would have to first adopt lifestyle changes to bring down their weight. They may also have to take some hormone supplements. Those in the Severe bracket may be advised to undergo some form of fertility therapy. For women in the Resistant category, IVF is regarded as the best route for pregnancy. ♦

# THE BOUNDS OF RESPONSIBILITY

**Samuel Abraham**  
Legal Advisor - BloomLife Hospital



**B**efore 1995, in India, the services offered by the medical professionals/hospital to a patient was a gratuitous service, where payment of fees need not be equivalent to the services received. However, after the judgment and orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in *Indian Medical Association Vs V.P. Shantha* (1995), the services offered to a patient became a contract of service where a doctor gives treatment and the patient pays for it. Therefore, it is a contractual obligation for both the parties – except if it is a Government Hospital, where the service is free for all.

When a doctor performs a surgery by following a procedure that is accepted by a body of professionals in that location during the relevant time, it suffices as treatment. No negligence is committed whether the patient is recovered or dead. From the hospital's point of view, the doctor has performed their services correctly. It is immaterial whether a patient is resuscitated back to normal or fails to survive.

“It is clear that every case where the treatment is not successful or patient dies during surgery, it cannot be automatically assumed that the medical professional was negligent.” was the judgment of Delhi High Court in *Master Pratham Singh Latwal Vs Guru Gobind Government Hospital & ors* (WP No:85850 of 2020).

As per the law, the patient / party who received the services or the legal heir to the deceased has a legal obligation / duty to pay the required fees to the hospital. However, in a few cases, the relatives may ask for some discount in the bills, which may be considered on sympathetic grounds by the hospital. However, it is not a right or matter of claim for the patient or his/her kin.

Moreover, a word of caution is absolutely necessary here: Hospitals can waive any portion of the fee or even the full fee only after getting a letter in writing from the legal heir(s) that the latter do not have resources to clear the bills. Otherwise, the heir(s) may later argue that it was due to professional negligence committed by the surgeon that the hospital waived the bills. So, hospitals have to be cautious about the extent and manner in which such requests are dealt with. ♦

*If a patient dies during a surgery, can their family expect to be exempted from paying the treatment fees to the hospital?*  
*A straightforward answer:*  
*Certainly not.*





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