

# WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Supplement

SEPTEMBER 22, 2012



# Snapshots of 21st Century Filipina Working Moms

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In generations past, societal roles were predefined for women with little flexibility to amend them. But today's woman has the freedom to "write her own ticket" in many areas of life, love and the workplace.

► COVER STORY S4

# Nasolacrimal Duct Obstruction: A Common Condition of the Eye Affecting Women

By Jorge G. Camara, M.D.

**B**ackground  
Nasolacrimal duct obstruction, or blocked tear ducts is a common condition that afflicts females more commonly than males. It is theorized that this increased incidence in females is due to hormonal changes, the failure to adequately remove make-up, inflammation, and anatomic narrowing of the lower passages of the tear duct drainage system. The following illustration demonstrates the anatomy of the tear duct drainage system.

The eyes produce approximately a tablespoon of tears a day. The tears act to protect and lubricate the eye, and after doing so, drain into two tiny openings shown above that drain into the lacrimal sac, and from there into the nasopharynx, or nasal cavity. Any blockage along the way will cause the tears to spill down

along the nasal side of the eye, or down the cheeks. The condition can be annoying, or if left untreated, can cause blurring of vision and can hamper one's ability to do work safely and productively. In the later stages, the condition can progress to an infection that can be life threatening.

## Incidence and Prevalence of Tear Duct Obstruction

It is estimated that about half a million people in the United States seek treatment for blocked tear ducts every year, with most cases being children and adults over the age of 50. As many as one tenth of new born babies can have a blocked tear duct which can resolve with conservative treatment. In adults, however, lack of diagnosis and treatment can lead to infections needing surgical intervention.

The causes of blocked tear ducts include the following:

- Enlargement of facial bones near the nose, due to aging



Blocked tear duct forming an abscess on the left eye. Requires laser surgery and abscess drainage to relieve the obstruction.

- Inflammation with an unknown cause
- Infection in the tear duct
- Nasal polyps
- Sinus disease
- Trauma to the eye or nose
- Tumor

## Symptoms of a blocked tear duct:

A blocked tear duct may have no symptoms other than mucous (muta or mukat) found at the corner of the eye closest to the nose. This is frequently noticed especially in the morning upon awakening. More commonly, symptoms include excessive tearing, foreign body sensation, pain in and around the eye, redness that won't go away, blurriness of vision, chronic infection and in the late stages, abscess or pimple formation at the base of the nose near the eye. If properly diagnosed and treated by an eye doctor, the condition can be prevented from getting worse.

## Conservative treatment of a blocked tear duct

Treatment in the early stages may include warm compresses, antibiotic eye drops, anti-inflammatory eye drops, lacrimal (tear duct) massage and avoidance of leaving eyelid makeup without removal.

If this fails to resolve, then nasolacrimal duct irrigation or flushing is done in the ophthalmologist's office, using topical (or eye drop) anesthesia. This procedure serves to both relieve the obstruction in some cases, but more importantly allows the ophthalmologist to determine how bad the obstruction is. This is quite similar to a plumber trying to unclog your bathroom sink drain or bathtub drain. If conservative treatment fails to resolve the problem, then surgical correction is necessary.

## Surgical treatment of a blocked tear duct

The surgical treatment of nasolacrimal duct obstruction in most places of the world is called an external dacryocystorhinotomy (DCR), an operation that is over a hundred years old. In this procedure, the surgeon makes an incision by the side of the nose (which is difficult if not impossible to hide), and drills a hole from the lacrimal sac into the nose, thus creating a new passageway for the blocked tear duct. While it can be successful, this procedure can lead to nasal bleeding, scarring on the face by the side of the nose, and recurrence of tearing.

For the last 19 years, the author has pioneered in a new laser procedure wherein the whole

procedure is done without any skin incision, and through the nose using a tiny camera. This procedure is called Endoscopic Laser Assisted Dacryocystorhinostomy (ELA-DCR) and is minimally invasive, allowing the patient to return to work, or school the very next day after surgery. Since there is no skin incision, there is no risk of scarring on the face, and there is much less bleeding than the external DCR. Close to 3,000 procedures have been done with an over 96% success rate and a high degree of patient satisfaction. Patients have been treated from all over Hawaii, Asia, Europe and the US mainland.

## Conclusion

Blocked tear ducts is a common condition afflicting many patients and causing excessive tearing, irritation, pain, and blurry vision. Ideally it should be treated early, but even when discovered in its later stages, blocked tear ducts can be successfully treated with laser surgery. ♀

**DR. JORGE G. CAMARA** is an internationally recognized expert in the diagnosis and treatment of blocked tear ducts. He has published multiple scientific studies and book chapters on the topic. His lectures, videos and presentations have been presented at the American Academy of Ophthalmology Annual Meetings for which the Academy's President will award Dr. Camara this year's Achievement Award on November 2012 in Chicago. Dr. Camara has pioneered in the development of a new laser procedure to treat blocked tear ducts and has received national awards for his research and innovations in this sub-specialty of ophthalmology. Dr. Camara recently received the prestigious Jose Rizal Award for Peace and Social Justice for his life-long work of innovation, research, humanitarian and community work.

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# The Working WoMOM's Support Group

By Heidi Mendita-Garayblas

**I** am a working woman, a wife and a mom to an almost 2-year-old girl. Come October, I will be a mom to 2 kids as I am due to give birth that month.

Being a working mother requires not only superhuman (ala Wonder Woman) abilities, but a strong resolve to make everything work according to how you want to have everything done.

These past few months have been especially hectic. I am not only preparing for the coming of another baby; I am also launching new work projects. I am literally giving birth to a lot of babies.

I have long accepted stress as a part of my life and as if my work and mommy duties are not enough, my husband and I just learned that I have gall stones.

A lot of people have been asking how I cope. My reply is:

always BREATHE!

My first pregnancy helped me learn to control and focus on things at hand. I took pregnancy yoga that prepared me for the daunting task of giving birth to a life. The yoga exercises helped immensely. So every time I am in a tough fix, I always tell myself to breathe!

Having a strong support group is also vital. A working mom should always have one. My life will be in total disarray and so will my sanity if I don't have such.

Being a working mom is really hard especially since my work is not the usual 9 to 5 job.

I work for an online gaming company. Some people may

think I have one of the coolest jobs as we operate the top on-line MMORPGs and casual games in the country.

Being in the online game industry, the pace is super fast! This ensures that not a day in the office wouldn't be action-packed and exciting.

Who composes the support group of a working mom?

- Husband
- Yaya
- My Mom
- Driver
- Strong Team at work

My husband is my rock. He has been and will always be a sounding board to my ideas and a listening ear to all my gripes. He resolves my cramps and gives me comfort whenever there are problems along the way.

Having the opportunity to work also required that I hire somebody to watch over my precious baby while I'm in the office. The yaya is a very special person for a working mom.

Not only do I leave my daughter with her, I trust that she will always champion her needs while I am away. Distrust is never an option. I will never leave my baby with somebody I don't trust.

When my daughter Pimpy was still very young, I had a fair share of yaya changes. My mom said that it is quite normal as I am a working mom, thus guidance and training were not given to the yaya from the start, only high expectations. Therefore during periods of search, I was left with no yaya.

This meant that I badly needed my mom to help me watch over Pimpy. This also meant that I had to go to Marikina from Quezon City to bring my daughter to her place before going to work in Makati. This also meant that I, after work in Makati, have to go back to Marikina to pick up my daughter and go home to Quezon City.



Those who would hear about this route would roll their eyes in surprise. This looks like... well, a tour of Metro Manila! For some weeks, this was my daily routine. Imagine the cost for the gas and other miscellaneous.

Another person in a working mom's support group would be a trusty driver. My trusty driver has been with me for quite some time, ensuring that I get to work and go home to Pimpy and my husband safely.

My Mom is the best support from the team. I don't think I can live without her. She has been my advisor and all-time ally as she completely under-

*(continued on page S5)*

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# Snapshots of 21st Century Filipina Working Moms

By Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand

**G**one are the days when a woman in this country had to choose between working as a housewife or a secretary. Gone are the days when a smart Filipina woman had to remain single and childless to climb the professional ladder. Making choices has not disappeared but the challenges are different and coping requires “superwoman” traits!

For this special issue of Hawaii Filipino Chronicle, five Filipina moms share their personal insights into motherhood, career and other commitments in the 21st century. Despite their busy schedules and hectic deadlines, five ladies showed what it takes to be a “superwoman.”

**Michelle D. Acosta,**  
Lawyer



**Q: How long have you been a mom? Tell us more about working moms nowadays.**

A: I was pregnant with my first child during my last semester of law school. I was in school, finishing up my internship at the prosecutor's office

and nesting all at the same time. My husband and I were married for four years before we had our first child. We dated two years prior to that. That gave us a total of six years of getting to know each other's strengths, quirks, weaknesses, hopes and ambitions.

Not everyone waits this long and I am not advocating to wait before having children. I think it worked in our favor to take the time to grow as a couple. Having children tests your patience and the strength of your will to be committed partners. You are in for some trying times when you bring that baby home and sleep deprivation sets in.

I stayed home with my first child until he entered pre-school. It was a hard adjustment since I was used to being busy and interacting with people. But my husband and I decided that since he was in a stable position that I would stay at home with our son.

We moved back to Hawaii after five years in Oregon. I managed to pass yet another bar exam, this time in Hawaii while

potty training my son and interviewing for pre-schools. Our second child was born in January of last year. Prior to our daughter's birth, I practiced at a law firm in Honolulu and later as a staff attorney at a non-profit agency for victims of domestic abuse. The decision to have another child came after much deliberation, perhaps more like a lapse in memory as to what it takes to have a baby. We thought that it would be good idea to have at least two, so that our children will have each other later in life. So with that, we are now complete.

**Q: Have you always been a career woman before becoming a mom?**

A: When you don't have kids, you don't realize how much time you have on your hands. Before becoming a mom, I worked for then-Congressman Neil Abercrombie. I then went to law school in Portland, Oregon. I worked full-time and was also active in the Filipino community. Yet with all that, I still had time

for family, friends, reading books at leisure, going to the movies and. In law school, I had time to study, work a part-time job, spend time with my husband, care for a dog and read novels in addition to law books.

I enjoyed working and having time to myself when I did not have kids. But if given the chance to go back to that lifestyle knowing what I know now as a working mom, I would not go back. I enjoyed those days, but it was a stage in life, and the stage I am in with my family and my career is something I am thankful to have.

**Q: How is motherhood shaping your career directions and vice versa?**

A: At a very young age, I had it in mind that I was going to be independent and have the freedom to do whatever I wanted to in life. I did not want to be tied down so I placed myself on a path for law school. I thought that a law degree would give me the most flexible means of making a living which would allow me to be anything, be anywhere and do anything I found interesting. Most of my friends thought that I would never get married.

When I met my husband, I found that being with him did not make me less independent or free. In fact, I found a companion with whom I could share life's adventures. Since that time, my husband has supported my

decision to pursue a law degree and open my own law practice.

Since becoming a mom, I have committed to finding that happy medium between career and my duties to my children. I decided that a solo practice would give me the most flexibility to continue in my trade and be available to my young children. As my own boss, I have absolute control over my caseload and how to manage my calendar. The downside is that I only have myself to complain about.

When I was in law school, someone told me that not concentrating on my career right after graduating was career suicide. I was concerned about how to get my legal career on track after taking a long break to be with my son. It's one of those decisions that you make, enjoy and not spend time regretting. Going solo in my law practice is the same way. You make things work as best you can and just enjoy the ride with your family.

My job as a family law attorney has also given me a unique perspective on how people manage or mismanage their relationships with their partners and/or their children. I have come to understand that family relationships are fragile and need to be constantly protected and nurtured. I am amazed with some of my clients who, despite having to resort to divorce, maintain a respectful relationship with their ex-spouse because they understand that a civil relationship with the mother or father or their child is good for their child.

Having a child is a lifelong and serious commitment not only to each other but also to the child. There are a lot of competing tensions between staying who you are as an individual, succeeding in your career, being a partner and being a parent. I don't necessarily think that you have to give up who you are, or your hopes and dreams when you become a parent, but you do have to adjust and make compromises when you have a child.

**Q: In the past, professional women seemed to need to choose between career and marriage, later between being a**

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COVER STORY

WOMEN'S HEALTH 2012

SNAPSHOTS... (from page S4)

**mom and career. What do you think is true nowadays?**

A: I think this is still true. There are a lot of news stories on female CEOs of big companies giving birth and choosing to go back to work after a short maternity leave. I don't know why that should be news. I think that the feminist movement was all about giving women the right to choose for themselves the kind of lifestyle they want to have. I do also believe that today, the reality for women who choose to take time off to rear their children will fall behind in the career ladder. But these days, more men are taking time off to be stay-at-home dads. So I think this is an issue that will be true for more fathers also.

**Q: Tell us more about the roles and duties that you assume at work, home, community and extended family obligations.**

A: I work with clients from different socio-economic backgrounds. I work not only as a legal advocate in divorce and child custody issues, but I also have to be a sympathetic ear.

I also try to do my part in providing volunteer legal service at the Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii (VLSH). The legal system can be quite overbearing and for those who truly cannot negotiate their way through the system, there is a dire need for more attorneys to provide pro bono service. Volunteering at VLSH allows me to do a small part in filling that need.

At home, I am CEO, nurse, psychologist, banker, entertainer, chef, chauffeur, travel agent, cheerleader and personal shopper. I come from a large Filipino family. My mother's siblings are scattered throughout the U.S.

and the Philippines, so when an opportunity to attend a family reunion in the Philippines earlier this year came up, I cleared my calendar to go. I think this is a great way to reconnect myself with my roots.

**Q: What are the challenges that readers should know and how do you cope?**

A: There is a lot of pressure on working moms to prove to the world that they can perform just as well as their childless or male co-workers. The sad reality is that resentment from co-workers will usually develop when you as the mom-employee have to take time off to attend to your kid or because you are pregnant.

It usually doesn't matter that you are hauling your work home, skipping your lunch break, coming in an hour early or working on weekends. The fact that you actually get that work done is not always going to be what your co-workers see as the bottom line. The bottom line to them is that you get to take off and have alternative work arrangements that they don't get to have because they don't have kids.

Working moms learn to streamline things and are for the most part much more productive because we learn how to get things done given the limited hours in a day. Working moms have two full-time jobs, one outside of the home and one in the home. It's a true challenge to try to give 110 percent at both jobs 100 percent of the time.

I think for modern career women, we give ourselves a lot of pressure to be good at everything we do. We don't like to leave things "half-baked." For me, I always think that if I am going to take the time to do

something, then I better put 100 percent effort into it, if not more. There's always a push and pull between career and motherhood. If you give 110 percent to your career 100 percent of the time, you feel guilty because you aren't giving 110 percent to your kids.

I remind myself each day is that we are human and prone to misgivings. There are days when you have to be more of one thing and less of the other. This doesn't mean that you are allowing yourself to slack, but you have to know your priorities and act on them. It's a matter of figuring out what needs to be done and the order in which they need to be done.

**Q: What personally surprises you about being a working mom?**

A: I was surprised with how emotionally and physically strong I felt when I became a mom. I don't know if it's the sense of accomplishment after the actual birth experience or knowing that you are fully responsible for the health, happiness and overall well-being of another person who looks to you as their constant.

In general, there is so much to be gained as a working mother. You feel good that you are bringing in income for your family and that you are working to help make life better for your family. You are also teaching your child that even

though you have to work, he or she is still number one in your book.

**THOUGHTS FROM OTHER FILIPINA SUPERWOMEN**

**Rosalina Burian, Architect**



**About oneself and being a working mom nowadays**

I am a registered architect in Hawaii and the Philippines. I work for UH Community Colleges in the facilities office as a project manager coordinating some of the design and construction projects in the 7 community colleges.

I am also a caregiver for my adult son, who was in a major accident when he was a teenager

and is now dealing with traumatic brain injury. I was always active in the community as a member of different organizations but when my son had his accident, I dropped everything to take care of him. After a few years, I gradually got back to some of them, but I limited myself to just a few. I am still active in FAHSH, FAUW and others. My biggest involvement now is with my son's group, the Brain Injury Association of Hawaii.

**Challenges, coping and tips**

I am super, super busy. My day is non-stop and everything is challenging. However, I have learned that in order to survive, I have to reserve some time for myself. I need to spend time with my friends and do enjoyable things, such as going to a concert or a play, or even just have lunch with friends. I draw my strength from friends.

I come from a military family. My father was Chief of the Philippine Air Force at one time, and we were known as "military brats." My father had very high expectations of all us kids. So, we were all high achievers. I

(continued on page S12)

THE WORKING... (from page S3)

stands every situation I am in. She used to be a working mom as well, so she knows what I am going through. She has the extra hands to help me especially during crunch time.

On the work front, a strong team is a requirement. I am really blessed to be working with a handful of very talented and dedicated group who works with me to achieve our goals. The team I am working with has been very solid (having gone through a lot). Together, we have combined decades of experience in gaming, marketing, product management, sales and operations. I am actually more confident to go into ML (maternity leave) as I know they will be able to take

care of things when I am out.

The daily grind of a working mom is like clockwork where everything should be well thought of and implemented well (same as when launching and implementing projects). Though there may be bumps along the road, there should always be room for adjustments. Mastery in adapting and adjusting should be primal in every working mom.

Through all the stress, hardships and never-ending challenges, the little success, my daughter's smile and the comfort that everything will turn out as planned or will at least be okay make my life as a working mom worth it.

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# Dangers of Drinking Alcohol During Pregnancy

*“Stop and think. If you're pregnant, don't drink.”*

by HFC Staff

**S**uch is the advice from health experts who warn women about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. According to the Mayo Clinic, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) may lead to physical deformities, mental retardation, learning disorders, vision difficulties and behavioral problems. Health officials say that prenatal exposure to alcohol can have a debilitating effect on the developing brain and central nervous system. In short, it kills cells in the brains of developing fetuses.

A 1996 study by the Institute of Medicine showed that out of all substances of abuse—including cocaine, heroin and

marijuana)—alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges pregnant women not to drink alcohol any time during pregnancy. According to the CDC, “There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant. There is no safe time during pregnancy to drink alcohol. There is no safe type of alcohol to drink while pregnant.”

“Many women may not realize they are pregnant and unintentionally expose their unborn child to the dangers of alcohol,” says Danette Wong Tomiyasu, Chief of the State Family Health Services Division. “Almost half or 46.5 percent of all live births in Hawaii in 2009 and 2010 were the result of unplanned pregnancies, and research has determined

that binge drinking during the first month of fetal development is especially harmful to the fetus.”

According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, more than 1 in 5 pregnant women report alcohol use in their first trimester. This would mean that in Hawaii, more than 3,800 babies born each year have been exposed to alcohol.

The CDC estimates that the lifetime healthcare cost for one individual with FASD is at least two million dollars. It is important to educate all women of childbearing age on the dangers of alcohol use to the unborn baby and the importance of seeking prenatal care early. CDC officials estimate that the lifetime healthcare cost for one

individual with FASD is at least \$2



million.

In conjunction with International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day, Governor Neil Abercrombie recently proclaimed September 9, 2012 as “Fetal Alcohol

Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day” in Hawaii to help increase awareness of the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. September 9 was chosen for the international observance so that, on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world will remember that during the nine months of preg-

nancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.

Health officials stress the importance of educating all women of childbearing age on the dangers of alcohol use to the unborn baby and the importance of seeking prenatal care early.

“When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby. Therefore, it's in the child's best interest for a pregnant woman to simply not drink alcohol,” says the Surgeon General in 2005 advisory on alcohol use during pregnancy. ♀

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**Elizabeth L. Abinsay, M.D.**

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## SUPPLEMENT NEWS

### Youth Day to Honor Hawaii's Keiki

**T**he 19th Annual Children & Youth Day is scheduled for Sunday, October 7, 2012 from 10 am to 3 pm. The event, which celebrates childhood and the special contributions that our youth make to the community, will take place on the grounds of the Hawaii State Capitol and its surrounding areas.

In 1993, the Hawaii State Legislature established Children & Youth Day in Hawaii as the first Sunday of every October. After much community discussion, Act 30 of 1997 was passed to dedicate the entire month of October as Children & Youth Month in Hawaii.

Co-chair Sen. Suzanne Chun-Oakland says last year's event attracted approximately 50,000 people and has become one of the largest community celebrations in the state.

“It has created lifetime memories for our keiki, 'opio and families as well as opportunities for family members to connect with one another and other families, and with wonderful commu-



nity resources that are available in our State in a fun-filled and life changing way,” says Chun-Oakland.

The free event promises over 300 fun, interactive and educational activities for the entire family, including games, rides, non-stop entertainment, ono grinds and guided tours. Free parking will be available at neighboring state and county public parking lots and at Central Middle School.

For more information, please call 586-6130 or go online to: [www.HawaiiCYD.org](http://www.HawaiiCYD.org). ♀

# Avoiding Canned Foods

**C**anned foods are quick and convenient, especially when you're tired after a long day at work and don't have the energy to whip up a home-cooked meal.

But according to a recent study published in the journal *Endocrinology*, canned foods containing Bisphenol A (BPA), a plastic-hardening chemical used to line canned items and other consumer products too numerous to list, can negatively affect the health of not only those who eat the food but also up to four generations of their children.

BPA is suspected of causing negative effects on the brain, behavior and prostate glands and has been linked to increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Most canned foods these days have a plastic coating inside the can to keep its contents fresh.

In the study, researchers fed one set of mouse mothers BPA-

laden food and regular food to another group, then monitored the behavior of their offspring and that of three subsequent generations. Mice that were directly exposed to BPA in the womb were less social and more isolated than the other group. Researchers noted that the behavior flipped by the third generation of mice, which were more social and engaged with the other mice. The behavior sounds positive but researchers concluded instead that BPA can potentially influence brain activity for successive generations.

Researchers found that some of the behavioral issues in all generations of mice were similar to those seen in autistic children and children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. What interested and disturbed researchers was that the mice were exposed to levels



of BPAs that humans are normally exposed to in their diets.

"Because mouse and human genetics are so similar, the animals are a good laboratory model for what could be happening in people," says Emilie F. Rissman, the study's lead investigator and a professor of biochemistry and molecular genetics at the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

Researchers suggest taking

the following measures to keep BPAs out of your body:

- Ditch canned food. Cans are lined with an epoxy resin that's made with BPA, and that includes things like soup, canned beans, and soda. Look for aseptic cartons, glass jars, and frozen foods as alternatives.
- Swap to glass containers. Rather than store your leftovers in plastic tubs, use glass or ceramic containers and dishes. Stainless steel containers make great substitutes for plastic lunch bags and takeout clamshells.
- Don't be duped by BPA-free plastics. A study in the journal "Environmental Health Perspectives" found that those seemingly better plastics can contain BPA alternatives that are even more harmful.
- Decline receipts. They're

coated with a BPA-based coating that rubs off onto your fingers and whatever else it comes in contact with.

- Be wary of dental sealants. BPA is the most commonly used dental sealant material, and it's used in composite fillings used to treat dental cavities. A recent study linked BPA in dental treatments to social problems in children, as well, prompting pediatricians to call on dentists to find other materials. However, because BPA is the most durable protective alternative in many dentists' toolboxes, they're currently reluctant to use other materials (and considering that the other primary filling alternative is mercury, the alternatives can be just as bad). Preventing cavities and tooth decay is your best bet here: Brush regularly and visit your dentist for regular cleanings. ♀

(Source: <http://blog.womenshealthmag.com/thisjustin/bpa-side-effects>)

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HEALTHLINE

WOMEN'S HEALTH 2012

# Study Questions How Much Better Organic Food Is

from [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com)

**W**ASHINGTON (AP) — Patient after patient asked: Is eating organic food, which costs more, really better for me?

Unsure, Stanford University doctors dug through reams of research to find out — and concluded there's little evidence that going organic is much healthier, citing only a few differences involving pesticides and antibiotics.

Eating organic fruits and vegetables can lower exposure to pesticides, including for children — but the amount measured from conventionally grown produce was within safety limits, the researchers reported Monday.

Nor did the organic foods prove more nutritious.

"I was absolutely surprised," said Dr. Dena Bravata,

a senior research affiliate at Stanford and long-time internist who began the analysis because so many of her patients asked if they should switch.

"There are many reasons why someone might choose organic foods over conventional foods,"

from environmental concerns to taste preferences, Bravata stressed. But when it comes to individual health, "there isn't much difference."

Her team did find a notable difference with antibiotic-resistant germs, a public health concern because they are harder to treat if they cause food poisoning.

Specialists long have said that organic or not, the chances of bacterial contamination of food are the same, and Monday's analysis agreed. But when bacteria did lurk in chicken or pork, germs in the non-organic meats had a 33



percent higher risk of being resistant to multiple antibiotics, the researchers reported Monday in the journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

That finding comes amid debate over feeding animals antibiotics, not because they're sick but to fatten them up. Farmers say it's necessary to meet demand for cheap meat. Public health advocates say it's one contributor to the nation's growing problem with increasingly hard-to-treat germs. Caroline Smith DeWaal, food safety director at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, counted 24 outbreaks linked to

multidrug-resistant germs in food between 2000 and 2010.

The government has begun steps to curb the nonmedical use of antibiotics on the farm.

Organic foods account for 4.2 percent of retail food sales, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It certifies products as organic if they meet certain requirements including being produced without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, or routine use of antibiotics or growth hormones.

Consumers can pay a lot more for some organic products but demand is rising: Organic foods accounted for \$31.4 billion sales last year, according to a recent Obama administration report. That's up from \$3.6 billion in 1997.

The Stanford team combed through thousands of studies to analyze the 237 that most rig-

orously compared organic and conventional foods. Bravata was dismayed that just 17 compared how people fared eating either diet while the rest investigated properties of the foods themselves.

Organic produce had a 30 percent lower risk of containing detectable pesticide levels. In two studies of children, urine testing showed lower pesticide levels in those on organic diets. But Bravata cautioned that both groups harbored very small amounts — and said one study suggested insecticide use in their homes may be more to blame than their food.

Still, some studies have suggested that even small pesticide exposures might be risky for some children, and the Organic Trade Association said the Stanford work confirms that organics can help consumers lower their exposure.

CSPI's DeWaal noted that difference, but added that the issue is more complicated.

(continued on page S13)

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# Kegel Exercises: A How-to Guide for Women

By Mayo Clinic Staff

**W**omen are often instructed to do Kegel exercises to strengthen their pelvic floor muscles which support the uterus, bladder and bowel. Kegel exercises are routinely taught at childbirth classes. Kegel exercises assist in vaginal childbirth and can also prevent or control urinary incontinence and other pelvic floor problems. The exercise was developed in 1948 by Dr. Arnold Kegel, a University of Southern California gynecologist, to help women with postpartum incontinence.

You can do Kegel exercises discreetly just about anytime, whether you're driving in your car, sitting at your desk or relaxing on the couch. You can even do Kegel exercises when you're pregnant. Start by understanding what Kegel exercises can do for you — then follow our step-by-

step instructions for contracting and relaxing your pelvic floor muscles.

## Why Kegel Exercises Matter

Many factors can weaken your pelvic floor muscles, including pregnancy, childbirth, aging and weight gain. This may allow your pelvic organs to descend and bulge into your vagina—a condition known as pelvic organ prolapse. The effects of pelvic organ prolapse range from uncomfortable pelvic pressure to leakage of urine. Fortunately, pelvic organ prolapse isn't inevitable. Kegel exercises can help delay or even prevent pelvic organ prolapse and the related symptoms.

Kegel exercises—along with counseling and sex therapy—may also be helpful for women who have persistent problems reaching orgasm.

## How to Do Kegel Exercises

It takes diligence to identify your pelvic floor muscles and



learn how to contract and relax them. Here are some pointers:

- **Find the right muscles.** Insert a finger inside your vagina and try to squeeze the surrounding muscles. You should feel your vagina tighten and your pelvic floor move upward. Then relax your muscles and feel your pelvic floor return to the starting position. You can also try to stop the flow of urine when you urinate. If you succeed, you've got the basic move. Don't make a habit of starting and stopping your urine stream, though. Doing Kegel exercises with a full bladder or while emptying your bladder can actually weaken the muscles, as well as lead to incomplete emptying of the

bladder—which increases the risk of a urinary tract infection.

- **Perfect your technique.** Once you've identified your pelvic floor muscles, empty your bladder and sit or lie down. Contract your pelvic floor muscles, hold the contraction for five seconds and then relax for five seconds. Try it four or five times in a row. Work up to keeping the muscles contracted for 10 seconds at a time, relaxing for 10 seconds between contractions.
- **Maintain your focus.** For best results, focus on tightening only your pelvic floor muscles. Be careful not to flex the muscles in your abdomen, thighs or buttocks. Avoid holding your breath. Instead, breathe freely during the exercises.
- **Repeat three times a day.** Aim for at least three sets of 10 repetitions a day. You might make a practice of fitting in a set every time you do a routine task, such as checking email, commuting

to work, preparing meals or watching TV.

## When You're Having Trouble

If you're having trouble doing Kegel exercises, don't be embarrassed to ask for help. Your doctor or other health care provider can give you important feedback so that you learn to isolate and exercise the correct muscles.

In some cases, biofeedback training may help. During a biofeedback session, your doctor or other health care provider inserts a small monitoring probe into your vagina or places adhesive electrodes on the skin outside your vagina or anus. When you contract your pelvic floor muscles, you'll see a measurement on a monitor that lets you know whether you've successfully contracted the right muscles. You'll also be able to see how long you hold the contraction.

If necessary, electrical stimulation is sometimes an option. During this procedure, your doctor or other health care provider applies a small electrical current to your pelvic floor muscles. The

(continued on page S12)

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## COVER STORY

## WOMEN'S HEALTH 2012

## SNAPSHOTS... (from page S5)

keep a color-coded calendar: black ink for work related activities, blue for my personal schedule and green for my son's activities. It helps me a lot.

**Millie Agoto Barsatan, Nurse****About oneself and being a working mom nowadays**

I became a very proud mother in December 2007 when my first son was born. So far, my husband Eric and I are blessed with three boys—Adrian Sean, Austin James and Andrew Luke. Even after having three kids, I sometimes still can't believe that I am a mother. Motherhood truly is the essence of being a woman and it's the most wonderful and greatest feeling of all.

As a young girl, I grew up wanting to be a nurse. I could not envision myself doing anything else. I decided to go with this profession because my grandmother raised me and so I wanted to someday take care of her. My grandmother is now with the Lord.

I followed my heart and today I am doing what I love and loving what I do. I have been working as a registered nurse since 1999. Also, I recently opened a care home, Aloha Angel Care. The process took about two years. I'm so excited because it will give me an opportunity to run my own business. In addition to my years of experience as a nurse in hospital settings, I am all about high, clinically-proven health standards in patient safety and quality care. I think that's what differentiates me from other care home operators.

**Challenges, coping and tips**

For me, the greatest challenge of being a mom is time. It's about finding a balance in everything—family, work, managing the family business, health, finances and everything else—not compromising quality.

I try to give 100 percent in everything I do. For example, when I spend time with my kids, I make sure that that I'm 100 percent present so that I can really connect with them. That's what makes it quality time with family and more memorable. When you're not present, the kids know it. At work, I have to really focus and bring my "A" game each time because I am dealing with people's lives.

What has worked for me are close family ties and relationships because we are on a small island. My parents and aunt help take care of my children. However, we have hired a regular sitter who is a close family friend. I am fortunate because we can fully trust her. I know that the process of finding a trusted sitter can be a nightmare.

Although life's demands get a little easier as time goes by, it still requires a lot of energy and effort. To cope, I make sure to include me on my "to-do list" so I can treat myself to something special. In addition, I attend church on Sundays to meet my spiritual needs and to be re-energized.

**Surprising discovery and realization**

That I can actually accomplish a lot in a day with the little time that I have. I used to wonder how successful career moms do it and now I know. It's all about being disciplined, knowing your priorities and what matters most, and excellent time management. Running a tight ship takes baby steps and a lot of hard work in the beginning, but you'll get there eventually. The key to being successful is knowing what makes your heart smile. You have to do what you love and you'll love what you do no matter what the obstacles or challenges that come your way.

**Patricia Halagao, PhD, Professor of Education****About oneself and being a working mom nowadays**

I am an Associate Professor of social studies and multicultural education at the University of Hawaii-Manoa College of Education. My focus is on the development and evaluation of multicultural curriculum and pedagogy with an emphasis on improving the K-12 education of Filipinos. My children's names are Marissa (age 8) and Jordan (age 6).

More than ever, women today balance multiple roles and responsibilities. My identity consists of a mother, wife, teacher, researcher, friend and community activist—a "mother-scholar" if you will. My kids are ready for school and out the door by 7:30 am. Since my husband takes them to school, I usually have a few minutes to read the newspaper and get ready for the day. My days are a mix of meetings, working on projects, writing and teaching. Unless I am teaching in the evening, my work ends at 4 pm when I pick up my kids from school. After extra-curricular activities, I usually cook dinner, get children to do their homework and chores, and get ready for bed, shower and brush teeth. I then lay down with the kids and read books with each of them. This is our bonding time. Lights out for the kids is around 8:30 pm after snuggling and praying with them. When they are asleep, I usually check emails and prep for the following day. I often don't go to bed until 12 midnight. And then the day starts all over again.

**Challenges, coping and tips**

I love being a mom! I think it is the most important job in the world. My family is my priority, but having said that, I never have enough time in the day to do everything I want. I am lucky to have a flexible job and a very supportive husband. My husband and I both value our family. We draw on Filipino values of family and hard work. We are also good at communicating with one another and we have established roles which is important so that we both know what is expected of each other in caring for the family. These roles are not necessarily traditional. We also share household chores to keep our home life functioning.

It is important to stay involved with your children's schooling. I am involved in their

school's executive council and attend as many activities as possible. I also offer my educational background in terms of curriculum when appropriate.

Finally, it's important to integrate our children's lives with our work and the community, especially to the Filipino community. It is important that my children see themselves as active contributors to society and to give back because we have a very blessed life.

I discovered a technology tool that I will make my life easier—myjobchart.com. It is a website that organizes the family's chores and responsibilities. However, technology cannot replace the time that you spend with your children. For example, I co-founded a Girl Scout troop because I wanted to be around similar professional moms with daughters like myself. It's a great opportunity to bond with my daughter, model leadership, and involve her in important issues and topics that empower and support her growth and development.

**Special thoughts**

Prioritize family. Take care of your husband. My mom always told me that a strong family stems from a strong marriage. I believe her.

**Cheryl De Guzman Galeria, Engineer****About oneself and being a working mom nowadays**

I am married to my loving husband Jorge and blessed with 2 kids—Joshua (age 9) and Samantha (age 2). I started

**KEGEL... (from page S11)**

current makes the muscles contract, which produces a buzzing feeling. Once you get used to the sensation, you'll probably be able to duplicate the exercise on your own.

**When to Expect Results**

If you do your Kegel exercises faithfully, you can expect to see results, such as less fre-

quent urine leakage, within about eight to 12 weeks. For some women, the improvement is dramatic. For others, Kegel exercises simply keep problems from getting any worse. For continued benefits, make Kegel exercises a permanent part of your daily routine. ♻

**Challenges, coping and tips**

As a working mom, I prioritize and balance everything every day so I can have a full, happy life and a rewarding career. Here is my advice for working moms:

(1) Recognize that you'll miss a parent-teacher meeting at school or an event/meeting at work. Be flexible on what is important at that time.

(2) Acknowledge help from your loved ones. I am very lucky that my husband helps me with the household chores, cleans the house, cooks, does laundry and washes dishes. As your kids grow and reach a certain age, teach them to do chores around the house.

(3) Make time to help with your child's homework and read to them.

(4) Make a grocery shopping list, calendar of activities and bill payment schedule. It makes your life more organized and efficient.

(5) Take care of yourself, exercise and eat right. I make time during lunch at work to walk around the block. Special thoughts

I am very happy being a working mom. It's challenging but very rewarding. My husband and I work hard for our kids so that they can have a comfortable life. We guide and discipline them as they grow into young adults who are ready to face the world. Being a working mom gives a woman confidence, a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, autonomy and control. My advice for working moms is to do your best, prioritize, know what's important and everything will be fine. ♻

quent urine leakage, within about eight to 12 weeks. For some women, the improvement is dramatic. For others, Kegel exercises simply keep problems from getting any worse. For continued benefits, make Kegel exercises a permanent part of your daily routine. ♻

Source:  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/womens-health/MY00379>

# Working Moms — Why For Do They Work? Say: For Money, Health, Hardship Or Luxury?

by Felino Tubera

**M**

Marvel at this wonder of creation: Woman! The anchor of motherhood. For a woman becoming a mother is another marvelous wonderful expression and extension of the infinite creative wisdom of the Creator. She is God's gift to man and all humanity. Ideally, as a mother, her role as a woman is home-based: feeds the baby, cleans the house, does the laundry, cooks the food, while the man, father of the house works outside as breadwinner in the parenting equation. For the life of men, fathers, especially, there's nothing wrong to that. In this setup, however, there exists a gender-defined limitation to what mothers can do. To herself and for others. Is there fairness to this? Ponder.

Consider the value and impact of progress: In this ever-changing world, comes a new slant in the order of things in the affairs of men: the emergence of Supermoms -- working mothers. Thanks to the wave of feminism that enabled them to step out of the traditional confines of just doing the age-old-assigned homework for mothers, to not only have the option and freedom to work gainfully outside the home, experience the feeling of being liberated and what

else -- make choices and decisions for themselves. Because of their newfound role in the workforce, their elevated status in the spectrum of human relationships, we pay them our tribute of respect and recognition.

Supermoms : this is a superlative energy-force that never before had a more gainful meaning to both men and women, than now. Working mothers, as differentiated from stay-at-home moms. I am a father, myself married to a working mother. And I wish I knew all the answers to questions, if not riddles of life, and on one particular question mark whirring restlessly in my mind: why and what for do mothers want or like to work outside their household? For money? For happiness, health and well-being? To make a statement of sacrificing something for the luxury enjoying some thing else?

To me, all mothers are working mothers. Make no mistake about it. Don't you ever minimize the importance and value of the work that stay-at-home mothers do. Neither would you take its place and function for granted, or ever look at it so lightly. More so, if you are somewhat a lazy father, or a lousy husband. Sometimes I chastise myself for thinking and feeling like one. My guilty feeling fortifies my suspicion that my wife enjoys working outside our home as her way of compensating for my idle notions about work, and as my re-



ward for trying to erase my inverse delusions about work environment for mothers and fathers. I once told my wife half-jokingly: "I married you to mother my child, by working outside you're abandoning our baby and neglecting me." And half-seriously, she said: I am not abandoning or neglecting no one. You get spoiled when I stay home. You are too precious to get spoiled." Ah, my wife! She just does not realize that when she leaves the house for work, me smiling like morning dew, and looking fresh as a newly harvested head of cabbage, that by the time she gets back home after work, I wouldn't be as shiny and smiling, but look like wilted unwatered plants and smelling like rotten onions in the trash bin. Yes, you can imagine the messy mesh a stay-home father doing the housework of a mother out to work for someone else. But if this one reason

justifies a mother's pursuit of happiness, let it be.

Both as a husband and a father, I recognize the importance of allowing the wife and mother to find her way leading to step-ladders she can climb to break the ceiling and make a place for herself in the oncemale-dominated work environment. There is nothing that changes a woman more than motherhood. But there is also nothing more ennobling than adding value and meaning to that gender-tied status of her exclusive right and privilege of mothering a child, by re-defining the shape and dimension of her physical/biological makeup, in such creative ways as balancing and adapting, if not equating her abilities and capacities to those challenges that men face, to achieve and reap the same rewards as men do ... sans the stigma of guilt for doing so. It's time that the male ego stop nurturing the negative attitude of looking at the female -- the

working mother, as being below the level of excellence and performance attainable by their opposite-gender peers.

Working mothers, supermoms that you are. Stay your ground and be proud where you are. We, your men, are behind you. It's being said repeatedly, that behind a successful man is a woman. Well, let it be said, too, that a happy, healthy, successful woman standing in front, knows that behind her, a proud happy man is enjoying the cool shade of her shadow.

Supermoms, for why-ever and what-ever reason you choose being or becoming working mothers, whether it is to sacrifice something to gain something, to make money to make more money, to be more happy, healthy and stress-free, we honor you with the luxury of your choice. Happy mothering-and-working ... to your health and happiness ... to the max! Super Max! ♀

## STUDY... (from page S8)

Some fruits and vegetables can harbor more pesticide residue than others — she listed peaches from Chile as topping a recent testing list. Overall levels have dropped in North American produce over the last decade as farms implemented some new standards addressing child concerns, she said.

"Parents with young children should consider where their produce is coming from," DeWaal said, calling types grown in the U.S. or Canada "a safer bet" for lower pesticide levels.

As for antibiotics, some farms that aren't certified organic have begun selling antibiotic-free meat or hormone-free milk, to address specific consumer demands, noted Bravata. Her own preference is to buy from local farmers in hopes of getting the ripest produce with the least handling.

That kind of mixed approach was evident in a market in the nation's capital Thursday, where Liz Pardue of Washington said she buys organic "partially for environmental reasons." Pardue said she doesn't go out of her way to shop organic, but if she does, it's to buy mostly things that are hard to wash like berries and lettuce.

Michelle Dent of Oxon Hill, Md., said she buys most of her groceries from regular chain stores but gets her fruit from organic markets: "It's fresh; you can really taste it."

Anna Hamadyk of Washington said she buys only organic milk because she has a young son.

"I would love to buy everything organic, but it's just too much money," said Hamadyk, who also shops at local farmers markets. ♀

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# When Does Your Personal Life Impact Your Business Life?

by James Michael Lafferty

**M**ANILA, Philippines — One of the biggest news stories over the past few days has been the case of an executive of a major multinational slapping and verbally abusing an MMDA enforcer. The YouTube video has had nearly two million hits. Bloggers have had a field day discussing the matter. And there have been many calls for the employer of the individual to take disciplinary action, including termination, for the offense — even if it occurred on the weekend on personal time!

While there are many opinions about this incident, for

many, it does raise the question of “When does my personal life impact on my professional (business) life?” It’s a good question. We used to live in a world of silos. We had our business life and it was compartmentalized. Then we had our personal life. And it, too, was compartmentalized. Two different worlds, and one did not necessarily have any impact on the other.

Not anymore. Not in the digital age. And any professional cannot be so naïve as to think, “My private life is my life, and totally separate from my professional life.” No way, my friend!

There are multiple scenar-

ios where a decision made in one’s private life can have a massive, even devastating impact on one’s professional life. Let’s talk about three of the most common scenarios:

• **Impact on corporate reputation.** One of a company’s most valuable assets is its reputation. And it’s the most protected, for good reason — it can take decades to build up, and yet in a short time the action of a few employees can tear it down. Think Arthur Anderson. Or Bear Stearns. Reputations destroyed in a matter of days. When an individual employee’s actions are so visible that they can rub off on corporate reputation — this is where a company can and should step in and take action. This can include any range of actions including separating from the employee — putting distance between both parties. This is very much the case we see today regarding the MMDA incident. Because the individual in question chose to engage in the act, and chose to identify his employer (seemingly as justification for being able to abuse a civil servant), this unfortunately brought his employer into the limelight. And any scan of the chat rooms will show it has impacted on corporate equity, at least short-term.

• **Raising doubts on one’s competence or values.** Sometimes a person will make a major gaffe in his personal life that will raise questions or doubts about that person’s

skills, competence, or principles. One can rail against the “unfairness” of this but that’s life — we can’t cleanly decouple our professional and private lives in an era of digital media and everything being public! It’s a risk we all take when we engage in digital media. There are many examples of this. I once had a colleague who was caught committing a crime. His arrest made the papers. And he was promptly fired the next day! Reason? Issues with his values and poor fit with the corporate values of honesty and integrity. And it’s not a good argument to say, “Well, I am honest at work but I limit my dishonesty to stealing on my personal time.” It doesn’t work like this.

Another example are several cases of a senior executive who was defrauded over a multi-year period for having a household helper unknowingly use their bank card to gradually withdraw well over \$100,000 and send it out of the country! This brings into question competence and attention to detail. If someone so loosely manages his own money (most people watch their own money closer than they do corporate money, and certainly should know where their bank card is for a multiyear period!) then it raises the question of how well managed are million-dollar corporate budgets under this person’s control?

A final example is occurring literally each week: a Facebook error. An employee spouts an opinion or controversial position that again clashes with a

corporate culture as well as garners media attention, and forces the company to act, as the employee and the company are “linked” to a potentially extreme position. This just happened at the Olympics multiple times, when Facebook or Twitter comments were so offensive that athletes were immediately banned from their national teams. Four or more years of hard work, all gone over one sentence. This is the world we live in.

• **Personal relationships.** For the most part, personal relationships are off-limits to one’s employer. But there are cases when it does become an issue for the company, and this typically involves a conflict of interest. As I have said to many employees over the years: “If you want to cheat on your wife, that is your decision and between you and your wife. However, if you choose to cheat with someone in this office, someone in your reporting line, well, then, you suddenly make it my problem.” People’s private lives are private. But if you choose to dip your pen into the company ink, you have to be prepared for some ramifications.

The best way to think about all of this is to adhere to the following: We no longer have a private life and a professional life. We just have a life. And it is all one continuum. Think about every action you take, and how that can impact your life in all areas. And, as I always said to my kids when they would go out on a Friday night, “Make good choices.”

(www.philstar.com) ♀

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# International SOS on Women's Health and Security - On Best Practices When Travelling Abroad

from [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com)

**A**ugust 2012: International SOS, the world's leading medical and security services company, highlights the need for gender-specific, pre-travel training for female business travellers. Today, women hold one in five senior management positions globally\*1, and make up 45% of the corporate travel market, meaning that there are more women travelling for business than ever before.

Here are some of our health and safety advice for women travelling abroad:

## 1. Access to medication which may be in short supply in less developed/low income countries

Make an appointment with your doctor or travel clinic for a basic checkup at least six to eight weeks before you depart. If you have an ongoing medical condition, ask your doctor about any additional precautions you'll need to take while away and find out if any vaccinations or health checks are required for your destination.

Always take a medical kit wherever you go, and consider packing medical items in a personal carryon bag so it will not be affected if checked luggage is lost or delayed. We'd advise you to carry your medication in its original packaging, and keep copies of your prescription with you. Women travellers can be susceptible to urine infections and thrush, and they can be side effects of certain kinds of malaria tablets. If you think you may be at risk, ask your doctor if you can take some medication with you.

## 2. Sanitary supplies and contraception

If you are due a period while you are away and are travelling outside of the Western World, it would be wise to take sanitary supplies with you as they may be unavailable in some cultures. Alternatively,

you may wish to speak to your doctor about continuing your contraception to avoid having a period whilst away.

If the issues of contraception come up, make sure that you plan ahead, discuss your contraception with your doctor, and consider packing supplies. If you suffer from diarrhoea while away, this can interrupt the absorption of the pill, and may leave you unprotected. If you are contacting an International SOS clinic or helpline, we ensure that there are female nurses and doctors available should you wish to speak to somebody.

## 3. Risks to personal safety

Dress modestly to avoid drawing attention to yourself, avoid wearing expensive jewellery and observe and respect local clothing customs. If you do receive attention from local men, ignore any propositions or suggestive comments they may make.

When walking alone in the street, keep your handbag and business luggage away from passing traffic. Familiarise yourself with your itinerary, walk purposefully and avoid using a map in full view. It is also a good idea to separate your credit cards from your cash; if one source is lost or stolen you still have a backup. When driving, roll up windows to within a few inches at the top, park in well-lit areas and always lock your doors.

Ensure your hotel room numbers remain confidential. Do not display the room's key tag in public areas, and stress that the room number should not be given to any inquirers. When checking in, ask the receptionist to write the room number down, rather than tell you within earshot of other people.

Insist that the hotel room has a key-chain, deadlock and spy-hole, and that the door and window locks work properly. Never open the door to anyone without taking precautions. If someone claims to be a member of staff, get their name and department and check.

## 4. Implications for preg-

## nancy whilst travelling

If you're planning to travel while pregnant be sure to see your doctor well in advance. Make sure your travel health insurance covers pregnancy-related conditions and neonatal care. It's also worth checking your airline's rules for pregnant passengers as some require a letter from your doctor confirming your stage of pregnancy.

Water quality can vary widely, so only drink boiled or bottled water - but plenty of it - and avoid ice. Avoid any pre-peeled fruit or salad, only eat fruit and vegetables that you peel and wash yourself. Avoid malarial zones, if possible. Even when taking anti-malarial drugs, pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the illness, which tends to affect them more severely.

Steer clear of altitude destinations higher than 12,000 feet as it is unknown what effects this may have on an unborn baby.

## 5. Know your surroundings

Knowing some information about your destination can be very important, whilst assumptions can be quite dangerous. Start by finding out which time zone your destination is in early, so you can start mentally and physically preparing for the adjustment.

Have you been there before? Do you know where the office is located and what local contacts will be available to support you? If not, speak to colleagues at home and abroad

who may be able to provide you with this information.

Some countries offer female only hotels, which you may prefer to stay in. When booking your hotel room, floors 3-6 give good security as they're far enough away from the lobby area but are still reachable by a

fire engine in the event of an emergency. Will you be able to review the streets surrounding your hotel and the route the office in the daylight? An understanding of the basic geography of the city and potential trouble spots may be invaluable so look-up the hotel website and speak to work security experts and people who've visited the country before.

International SOS members should read the country information on travel security online, review the standing travel advice and information provided in our cultural issues and etiquette section, and the security information for businesswomen. In addition, members are welcome to call the International SOS Assistance Centres for additional information and advice.

## About International SOS

International SOS (<http://www.internationalsos.com/>) is the world's leading medical & security services company operating from over 700 sites in 70 countries with 10,000 employees, led by 1,100 physicians and 200 security specialists. Our global services include medical and risk planning, preventative programs, in-country expertise and emergency response for travellers, expatriates and their dependents of over 70 percent of the Fortune 500 companies.

## Notes to Editors

International SOS works with its clients to ensure their female travellers get the targeted support they need. The company

has organised a number of webinars, globally, to advise and educate women in business to make sure that they stay safe and healthy whilst travelling abroad. Members also have access to an e-learning module, aimed specifically at women, to prepare them before embarking on any business trip.

In the event of a medical issue, female travellers can request to speak with a female doctor, and International SOS provides an emergency hotline so women travelling abroad can call for assistance in the event of medical or security incidents. International SOS also ensures that women members travelling with families have access to dedicated concierge services and paediatric care including first-aid kits with paediatric supplies.

## For more information

For further information on International SOS, or to request an interview with a company representative, please contact either of the following:

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# Swedish Doctors Claim Pioneering Uterus Transplant

from [www.philstar.com](http://www.philstar.com)

**S**TOCKHOLM (AP) — Two Swedish women are hoping to get pregnant after undergoing what doctors are calling the world's first mother-to-daughter uterus transplants.

Specialists at the University of Goteborg said they performed the surgery over the weekend without complications but added that they won't consider it successful unless the women give birth to healthy children.

"That's the best proof," said Michael Olausson, one of the surgeons.

One of the unidentified women had her uterus removed many years ago because of cervical cancer, while the other was born without a womb. Both are in their 30s.

They will undergo a year of observation before doctors at-

tempt to help them get pregnant via in vitro fertilization, in which embryos created with eggs from their own ovaries will be implanted in their wombs.

Researchers around the world have been looking for ways to transplant wombs so that women who have lost a uterus to cancer or other diseases can become pregnant.

Fertility experts hailed the Swedish transplants as a significant step but stressed it remains to be seen whether they will result in successful pregnancies.

Even if the approach works, it is unclear how many women will choose such an option, given the risks and the extreme nature of the operation compared with, say, using a surrogate mother.

Turkish doctors last year said they performed the first successful uterus transplant, giving a womb from a deceased donor to a young woman. Olausson said that woman is



doing fine, but he wasn't sure whether she has started fertility treatment.

In 2000, doctors in Saudi Arabia transplanted a uterus from a live donor, but it had to be removed three months later because of a blood clot.

Olausson said there could be a lower risk of organ rejection when the donor is a family member, but he said a more important factor is the "emotional connection" between mother and daughter.

Also, the mother-daughter procedure makes it easier to "know that the transplanted organ works," he said, adding

that it doesn't matter whether the donor is past menopause.

For a year, doctors will monitor how the two patients respond to the anti-rejection drugs needed to stop their immune systems from attacking the donated wombs.

After a maximum of two pregnancies, the wombs will be removed so the women can stop taking the drugs, which can have side effects such as high blood pressure, swelling and diabetes and may also raise the risk of some types of cancer.

"There's no doubt this will be a pioneering step if it's been successful," said Scott Nelson, chairman of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. "At present, the only option for these women is to have a surrogacy — i.e., having their embryos implanted into another woman."

Nelson said a donated womb would not contain all the blood vessels it originally had, possibly compromising a baby's development.

"Pre-term birth is a major

risk — i.e., a small baby being born. That's what you'd mainly be worried about," he said.

James Grifo, an infertility expert at New York University, questioned how a fetus would be affected by the immune-suppressing drugs.

"Some people will always be willing to take the risk, but there are issues that need to be addressed before you expose a fetus to these medicines," he said. Grifo and colleagues at NYU abandoned a uterus transplant program "because some issues seemed insurmountable."

"The group of patients that would need this is so small we decided to focus our efforts elsewhere," he said. "We started in rats, but once we got to humans, it became very clear the rejection drug was going to be the issue, and we didn't know how to safely deal with that issue."

In Sweden, Olausson said anti-rejection drugs have not proved harmful to fetuses when the mother has undergone other organ transplants. Also, tests on mice, rats and pigs with transplanted wombs showed no ill effects from such drugs, he said. ♀

**The Hawaii Filipino Chronicle**  
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