

PARENTING WITH LISA SALMON



Trust your instincts on childcare

LEARNING to trust your own instincts is an important part of looking after a baby, says mother-of-two Rosie Newman, author of *Trust Your Body, Trust Your Baby*.

I've just had my baby and feel bombarded with well-meaning advice about how to look after her properly.

How can I know what's best for her? is a typical question.

Says Rosie: "It's really hard to filter the helpful advice from the not-so-helpful.

"It comes from people who mean well, and often from our closest family and friends.

"I struggled to follow any of 'the rules' with my babies, whether it was to do with sleeping, feeding or crying.

"One of my children could be described as gregarious and a little bit pushy.

"He pushes boundaries, pushes his own limits and he struggled to learn not to push other children.

"He's not unkind or undisciplined, but that's probably what it looked like to others.

"His pushy nature is a part of the way he is - he was like that before he was even born.

"This insight helped me stay centred when I had to decide how to deal with his behaviour; to remain calm and compassionate when I might have otherwise felt anger, shame or despair.

"I came to realise that, choosing our own path is part of the growing up process we all go through when we become parents.

"It took me a while to gain confidence in my own judgement, but it's an important step and one you can only take if you go out on a limb and go with your gut.

"The truth is, you probably already know what's right for your baby, because you can feel it.

"But it may not be what the 'good advice' tells you to do and in the end, it's up to you as a mother to decide.

"Building a bond of trust is all about paying attention to those feelings and instincts.

"If your child knows you're on their side, they'll have confidence in you as their ally in a world that won't give them the benefit of the doubt.

"If someone offers you their opinion, or a piece of advice and you feel it's not right for you or your baby, rest assured, nobody understands your child like you do.

"No two babies are alike and no two mothers should be either.

"Trust your body. Trust your baby. Do what feels right to you."

● *Trust Your Body, Trust Your Baby* is published by Pinter & Martin, priced £11.99, and is available now.

SINGING STAR RAISING AWARENESS OF LUPUS

HEALTH



With Dr Zak Uddin

WHILE certain illnesses automatically appeal to the public conscience and interest, some conditions do not gain the same coverage, and hence are less well understood.

This includes Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), often abbreviated to lupus.

However, this has changed since singer Selena Gomez used her own story to raise awareness of this condition.

She successfully underwent a kidney transplant because of complications arising from the disease.

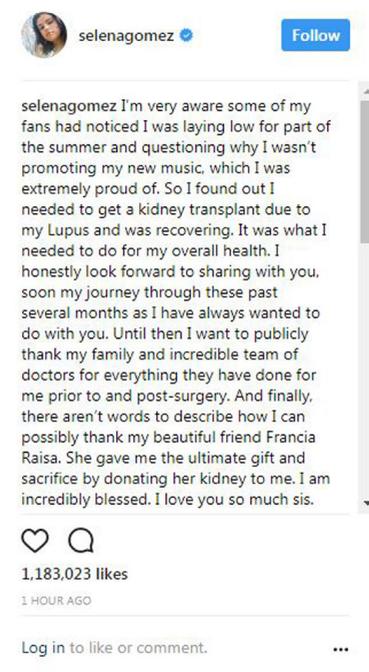
SLE is an autoimmune disease. This means the body's natural antibodies, which would normally fight infection, begin to attack the individual's own organs, causing these to become inflamed.

Typical features include muscle and joint pains, with unrelenting fatigue. Lupus can literally affect any part of the body and presentations vary from persistent mouth ulcers to recurrent miscarriage.

It has been referred to as "the disease with a thousand faces", with the potential to involve the skin and all internal organs.

We don't know the exact cause of SLE, only that there are certain triggers. Lupus is almost ten times more common in women, with hormonal changes such as during puberty, pregnancy and the menopause, often prompting the start of symptoms.

Equally, viral infection, exposure to strong sunlight and certain medications can be the catalyst. There is a genetic component,



GIFT: The Instagram page of Selena Gomez, right, who has revealed she has undergone a kidney transplant and has thanked her friend who was her organ donor *Picture: Selena Gomez/Instagram/PA Wire*

although only three in 100 persons with SLE have a parent with the condition. The age at which the disease first presents varies widely from teenage years to middle age and beyond, and it occurs more frequently in Afro-Caribbean, Chinese and Asians. SLE can be notoriously difficult to diagnose, and relies on being aware of the condition as a potential cause for what can often be multiple symptoms, physical and mental. Blood tests demonstrating high levels of antibodies known to be involved in SLE may help, although confusingly these are sometimes raised in perfectly healthy individuals.

Treatment depends on the organs involved and to what extent. Although there is no cure at present, management commences

with pain relief. Hydroxychloroquine, also used in treating malaria, may help when painkillers are no longer adequate, and is useful for skin problems associated with lupus. Steroids may help dampen flare ups of the disease. For a minority of persons with aggressive disease, immunosuppressant medication may help to quieten down the body's own protective system. While a small number of individuals will be severely affected, the warming news is that most people with SLE lead active, normal lives, with mild to moderate symptoms that can be well controlled.

On a personal level, recognizing your limits and pacing yourself will certainly help, while reducing your activities during

flare ups may decrease the amount of frustration experienced. A healthy diet, routine cardiovascular exercise and adequate sleep may reduce your chances of picking up infections. As sunlight is known to aggravate SLE, a high factor sunscreen and covering exposed skin is important, especially on hot days. With support groups online and in person, as well as the help of trained healthcare professionals, there is usually someone who will lend an ear and address any questions you may have about your illness.

Useful websites
www.lupusuk.org.uk
www.arthritisresearchuk.org
www.awarenessdays.com

Dr Zak answers your health questions

Q: My wife has asked me to see our GP as she thinks I am suffering from depression. Our life is quite stressful, we have two teenage children and I work long hours. I know that I do have a bad temper, but I don't want to take pills for an illness I don't believe I have – John, aged 45

A: It sounds like you have a fairly hectic life. While you may be right about not suffering with depression, a bad temper can be a sign of low mood, which if not addressed may get worse. You have identified some of the things that upset you. Perhaps the first

step would be to sit down with your wife and talk about your feelings. Getting things off your chest can often be a good start. If you feel you need help, trained counsellors are available to help you work through troublesome issues, without the need for medication.

Q: Is the flu jab really necessary? I have heard that it doesn't work and can even make flu worse – Sandra, aged 60

A: The flu vaccination is normally reserved for individuals in whom flu may develop into a potentially

serious illness. This includes anyone with a serious long term illness, pregnant women and persons over 65. Carers and frontline health workers are also advised to get immunised. Although the jab is not effective against all strains of infection, it is against the majority. You may get a short lived viral type illness at the time, but there is little if any evidence to suggest the jab will give you flu itself. Also, if you are immunised and you still get the flu, it is often milder and shorter lived than if you hadn't been vaccinated.

If you have a question for Dr Zak, please email: askdoctorzak@gmail.com, visit the website doctorzak.co.uk or follow him on Twitter @AskDoctorZak. Dr Uddin's advice is provided in good faith and in accordance with currently accepted evidence. However, this content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You should always seek the advice of a GP, or other qualified health provider, regarding a medical condition.