



Ann Peacock

TALES OF A MODERN WOMAN

Pregnancy diet damage feeds a mother's guilt

READ last week a report that a child's physical disposition is determined by the mother's diet during pregnancy.

It revealed a mother's diet during pregnancy affects the baby's brain circuits and can determine not only their child's appetite but also the way in which they expend their energy.

"This suggests that maybe mothers should think twice about overindulging, or using the excuse that they're eating for two during pregnancy," Professor Margaret Morris, of the University of NSW, was quoted as saying.

Unlike many other studies, her research highlights the prenatal period as a critical time for

"programming of postnatal and adult appetite" — showing that, before a woman has even conceived, she is potentially programming her child's future eating habits.

The findings, recently presented at the Australian Neuroscience Society conference in Hobart, are supported by a study published in the British Journal of Nutrition last year that found junk food-eating mums-to-be might produce children who craved the same fatty foods.

It made me reflect on my own diet during pregnancy.

With my first, I just ate as I usually did at the time (pretty healthily) but, I do admit, a lot more than normal. I didn't say no to occasional chocolate

or ice-cream, but I also didn't weigh myself down with pizza and greasy fish and chips — even though I had some friends telling me I should make the most of the chance to gorge and not feel guilty about extra weight gain.

Another thing I didn't do was eat red meat and, pretty much his whole life, my now almost eight-year-old son has not liked eating red meat. In fact, I find it hard to even get chicken into him some nights. Did I cause this?

With my second child, however, I was a lot more relaxed. I still ate mainly healthy food and had also added red meat (extra iron was good for me running around after one little one), plus I was quite a bit less fussy

about banning any sweet treats and perhaps treated myself to such treats too much many, many times.

And my second son? He eats red meat (albeit only if it's covered in crumbs), cannot stand fruit (it has been known to make him vomit.) and he adores chocolate and lollies. Is this also my fault?

As if mothering didn't already uncover enough to feel guilty about. Now I feel like perhaps I shouldn't even tell my boys off when dinner times turn into frustrating sessions of complaints and negotiations. If I had only watched what I ate a little more closely, it seems I might not have to watch them.

Modern dilemma

DO you have a sticky social situation or etiquette dilemma that is bothering you? Ann's no-nonsense approach may help.

Q I have heard of "terrible twos" but, luckily my daughter bypassed all that and was quite a darling toddler. But now she's 10, all hell seems to have broken loose.

Her passion is competitive tennis and it seems I have a mini-McEnroe on my hands. If she loses a point, she has been known to toss her racquet, yell at the umpire, her opponent and anyone else who might disagree with her.

I have always raised her to try to be her best but am worried I have created a monster. Should I stop her playing tennis? She seems to enjoy it, but perhaps the strain is too much. Or perhaps it is just the onset of raging hormones.

A You have obviously tried your hardest to raise a strong, independent, modern young woman and now are feeling it has come back to haunt you.

That said, strength and independence do not have to equate to bad manners — something your daughter seems to be displaying in abundance. If she can't find a balance between confidence and blatant rudeness, I would say you need to take a Super Nanny approach and get tough.

You say she loves tennis. Stop paying for her lessons. Tell her she cannot continue to do this thing she enjoys if her bad behaviour makes it so unenjoyable (and embarrassing) for everyone else involved.

If you don't want to seem like the lone wolf telling her the error of her ways, enlist the support of her coach and have a bit of an intervention. If the coach isn't on your side, it's a sign the coach is as bad as she is.

If your daughter truly loves the game, she will change her ways (with a little support from you).

If she doesn't seem in a hurry to go back to tennis, then maybe she wasn't that interested after all. Perhaps the pressure was making her act out and, away from the stress, you might find she turns back into the cheerful girl once more. She can always come back to tennis when she is older and wiser.

WRITE to me in less than 100 words at peacock@heraldsun.com.au

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Get ready to pop into the penthouse

● IT launched last year and returns for the 2008 L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival. If you missed this popular guerilla retail event last year, don't miss the pop-up shop, Penthouse Mouse — back in Melbourne for two exclusive weeks from Saturday, February 23, until Sunday, March 9.

The venue isn't glamorous but the abandoned warehouse space at 46 Stanley St, Collingwood, will feature plenty of fashion that is — a heap of established and hot emerging labels, including Nique, Skin and Threads, Limesdrop, Leonard Street, Hua, Vicious Threads, Trimapee, Montlaroc and Pigeon Combine, with more to be announced. Jewellery from a hand-picked selection of Australian designers will also be on sale.

Get set for the general public invitation to a Champagne Shopping evening, on Wednesday, March 5, and check www.penthousemouse.com or join the Facebook group Penthouse Mouse to keep up to date with daily goings-on.



Did anyone order a sixpack?: The perfectly formed staff of Helpful Hunks are a hit with hens' parties and will even do the washing up.

Woman of the week



CAROLINE GILLMER

IT couldn't have been an easy role to take on, but Caroline Gillmer is outstanding as the notorious Judy Moran in Channel 9's new (and much talked about) show, *Underbelly*. Caroline has been a star of stage and TV for many years, but this must surely have been one of her biggest and most outstanding acting challenges.

I get by with a little help from my hunks

HAVE you been asked to organise a hens' night?

A friend asked for advice on this front recently — wondering whether she should take the saucy route and hire a male stripper or stick to more innocent girlie fun with a business called Helpful Hunks (www.helpfulhunks.com.au) that provides mini-facials, tarot card reading and massages over champagne and nibbles.

In the end, she chose the fortune telling/facials idea — an acknowledgment that there comes a time when you feel too old to be entertained by the traditional hens' night stripper.

But if you are looking for something different for that next work function or girls' night in and don't mind being a bit cheeky, a new business called Helpful Hunks (www.helpfulhunks.com.au) may be an alternative.

OK, so it may not be a great idea if you're the manager of a mechanics' workshop and looking to throw an incentive-building soiree for your team, but for women keen to have a bit of a laugh and the chance to peek at some handsome men baring more

than is usually socially acceptable in public, it's worth a look (or two).

After all, the idea of men waiting on the assembled guests wearing bow ties and, well, not much else would at least get people talking.

I am not sure what the occupational

'Not only are our hunks great to look at with their fantastic physiques and skimpy outfits, but they will also greet your guests, serve food and drinks, wash dishes and clean up'

GEORGE TALEPOROS

health and safety conditions for the men are like (serving hot drinks could be hazardous), but Helpful Hunks manager George Taleporos described the concept as "a party accessory like no other".

"Typically, our clients are women looking for something a bit sexy and fun for their hens' nights and private parties," George said.

"We also cater for corporate clients who want their event to be memorable. Ladies' lunches for sporting clubs are also popular. We also like to do fundraisers for worthy causes at cost price as a way of giving back to the community."

Ah, you've got to love a little community-mindedness.

With the client able to choose how sexy they want their Helpful Hunks to be, George said that "bare-chested with suit pants" is a less revealing option, while the most popular choice is "just a collar, cuffs, bow tie and a bottom-revealing apron".

"Not only are our hunks great to look at with their fantastic physiques and skimpy outfits, but they will also greet your guests, serve food and drinks, wash dishes and clean up," George said.

There's nothing better than a man who cleans up, let alone a hunky one. Now all I need is a reason for a party.