

KEY POINTS IN EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

○ The capacity to learn is a combination of nature (genetics) and nurture (environment). Nature provides the complex system of brain circuitry, but how it is wired depends upon your child's environment (surroundings, stimulation, nutrition, etc.).

○ Early experiences, beginning even before your child was born, determine the brain's structures and capacities. The quality, quantity, and consistency of stimulation is they key to healthy brain development.

○ The brain develops with human interactions and caring relationships. Warm, supportive, and healthy relationships promote learning and provide important buffers against stressors.



○ There are windows of opportunity for brain development. During these times, the brain is more capable of learning certain functions. The first five years of life are especially critical for development.

○ Brain development is not a step-by-step process. It is more like a spiral with waves that lasts a life-time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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HEALTHY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



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BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS

Today we know so much more about how the brain develops and its influence



on your child's development. The brain begins working long before it is finished developing.

The same process of wiring in the brain that took place before your child was born continues at a very rapid rate immediately after birth.

How you interact with your child, positive or negative, will affect how your child's brain develops. Although it takes 15-20 years for the brain to develop to its fullest capacity, most of the critical connections are made in the early years.

In your child's first five years, there will be many "windows of opportunity" for influencing healthy brain development. In fact, there are certain windows that are only open during the early years

Your early interactions with your child will determine how your child's brain circuits are wired. You can support positive brain development through many of your everyday actions and activities with your child.

A FEW SIMPLE STEPS TO YOUR CHILD'S HEALTHY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

► CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Give your child lots of attention and affection. Show her and tell her that you care for her and that she is important in your life. Understand your child's moods and rhythms. Take action quickly when she is uncomfortable, frightened, tired, or happy! Caring for her needs



shows her that she can count on you to provide for her. Your child will learn to trust and develop self-control when she feels loved and secure.

► LOVING ENVIRONMENTS

Be sure that your home is safe and free from hazards. When your child feels safe, she feels comfortable to explore and try new things, which creates new connections in her brain. New experiences promote the stimulus her brain needs for those important connections.

► COMMUNICATION

Other important brain connections are formed through talking and listening. Talk about what you see, what you hear, what you are doing. Talking often with your child will also promote his language development and build his vocabulary. Describe what

you're doing when you dress or bathe him, or are making a meal ~ TALK, TALK, TALK!

► CARING PHYSICAL CONTACT

Cuddling, hugging, and holding your child will also make him feel secure and a sense of belonging. It will help him to form caring relationships with others and continue his healthy development.

► ESTABLISH ROUTINES

Create routines around meal times, naptime, bedtime, and other important parts of your day. Being predictable in your daily schedule helps your child to feel secure in knowing what to expect.

► READ EVERY DAY

One of the most important ways you can enhance your child's brain development is to read aloud to her every day. This will also lay a strong foundation for her literacy development that formal reading instruction will be built upon during the school years.

► SINGING AND MAKING MUSIC

Singing, listening to music, and doing rhythmic activities create new connections in the part of the brain that will later be used for math, problem-solving, and science.

