



First-time parents/caregivers and babies have something very important in common. They are both brand new. A parent is brand new to the job of raising a little person, and the baby is new to everything they experience after they are born. A parent/caregiver cares for both the baby and self during pregnancy and after the birth, they start their new parent job right way! The baby needs the parent/caregiver to help them grow and learn in the best possible way.

Your baby's brain keeps developing after birth. They need your talking, touching, looking at and loving them to help their brain to keep growing strong and healthy. Did you know that over 1,000,000 learning connections happen in a baby's brain every second? It is true! Every time your baby hears a sound, sees things, or feels something, their little brain is making important learning connections. The more your baby hears, sees, or feels things that let him know you love them, the more connections grow in their little brain. In fact, almost 85% of a human's brain develops in the first three years of life! This means that your baby's first three years of life are the most important for their future health and learning.

Here are some ideas you can use to make sure your baby will grow in a healthy way:

1. Cuddle your baby often. Talk to your baby, smile, laugh and play with them. Look into their eyes and tell them how happy you are that they are here. This shows your baby you love them! Babies need you and your attention to build a strong brain.
2. Keep your baby and yourself healthy. Fresh air and movement are good for both you and your baby. Getting outside for 20 minutes each day is good for your body and your mind – and Baby's, too!
3. A clean environment and strong connection between you and your baby keeps you both safe and able to learn well and grow. Smoking, drugs, and alcohol hurt the connection between you and your baby. Connect with your pediatrician or clinic staff for information.
4. Ask for support. Find the people in your life who can help you and your baby to eat healthy and rest often as you both grow and change each day. The most powerful ingredient for healthy development is human love. Your baby needs love, and you do, too!

You and you baby are both learning new things every day. You are learning the important job of being a parent and caregiver. Your baby is developing their physical, emotional, and mental skills. Growing and learning takes time and energy, whether you are an adult or a baby. Be patient and take care of yourself and your little one during these early months and years. It is building a foundation for future health and learning.



Resources:

Harvard University: Center on the Developing Child = <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/key-concept/brain-architecture/>

First 1,000 Days – A Critical Time for Children’s Brain Development. Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain= <https://midb.umn.edu/news/first-1000-days-critical-time-childrens-brain-development>

American Academy of Pediatrics =<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/141/2/e20173716/38085/Advocacy-for-Improving-Nutrition-in-the-First-1000>

Greater Twin Cities United Way = <https://www.gtcuw.org/our-impact/80x3/>

University of Connecticut Healthy Environments for Children= <https://healthyhomes.uconn.edu/healthy-environments-for-children/#:~:text=They%20learn%20that%20a%20healthy,chemicals%2C%20and%20in%20good%20repair>

Carrying Matters: Dr. Rosie Knowles <https://www.carryingmatters.co.uk/2019/02/05/infant-mental-health/#:~:text=The%20first%201001%20days%20is,and%20the%20experiences%20they%20have>