

# HOW TO RAISE A SMART BABY

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2010



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# How to Raise a Smart Baby

## Introduction

Welcome to 'How To Raise a Smart Baby'. This ebook provides parents and carers with the latest research and tips on the best ways we know to enhance infant brain development.

While it is important to be a relaxed parent, some parents simply think that a child is either intelligent or they are not (based on their genetic composition). Little do they know, the role the parent plays in the first two years of a baby's life, greatly influences their future IQ. Here's how.....

The key developmental period for boosting baby's brain power is from the third trimester until around two. At birth, a baby's brain contains 100 billion neurons (equivalent to the number of stars in the Milky Way). And these crucial first years will see the development of trillions of brain-cell connections, called "neural

synapses". Synapses that are not "wired together" by stimulation are pruned and lost during the school years.

When a baby is born, all those neurons in their brain are not connected up in the way they need to be for learning or understanding. What wires up a baby's brain is you, the adult who interacts with them. You are the teacher and sculptor of your baby's brain.

Consequently a parent who can spend lots of quality time enriching their baby in their first few years of life is one of the most important factors of baby brain development.

## **Importance of Play in Brain Development**

Playtime is more than fun and games--it's functional when it comes to your baby's brain. Babies playtime helps to link the 100 billion neurons, forming connections that impact thinking, emotion, and behavior.

The brain must be used and stimulated for it to grow and take form. Helping your baby learn to play motivates them to solve problems and figure things out themselves.

Banging on pots and pans, playing house, and reading all boost brain growth. Enrich your child's educational experience as she develops--and keep the wheels in her head turning.

Now is the time to encourage a love of reading; it provides the building blocks for visual, speech, and language development. Cuddle up with books containing large, colorful pictures and have fun by getting into character. Simple activities such as shaking a rattle or

filling a bucket with blocks teach cause and effect and concepts like "in and out," respectively, while improving motor skills.

As infant-development experts believe that the first years of a child's life are a prime time for learning, sometimes it may be hard to think of new ways to stimulate your baby. In the next chapter, discover what fun and meaningful activities you can do to raise a smart baby.

## **What you need to do:**

Newborns depend on you completely, so the most important thing your infant learns in the first four weeks is to trust you.

Give your child your plenty of attention, gentle words, and a loving touch, and respond promptly to her cries. Providing security will help your infant understand that her world is a safe place.

Your baby has been snug inside your womb, and the outside world is totally unfamiliar. Don't expose her to too much external stimulation, like bright lights and loud noises early on.

### **What your baby will learn: (1 – 3 months)**

He's starting to grasp that people and things exist, and they are separate from him and from each other. He'll be able to follow moving objects that are close by, and identify where certain sounds - - such as your voice -- are coming from.

Tip: Place a mobile over his crib, put him tummy-down on a gym mat to play, and let him look into a non-breakable mirror: He'll be

captivated by anything that moves. At around 8 weeks he'll start to notice checkerboard patterns.

Be mindful: Toys with lots of lights, bells, and whistles probably won't be much fun for a baby at this age, so keep playthings simple.

Competing noises (such as a vacuum cleaner and the stereo) may also stress him out.

#### **4 to 6 months**

She's figuring out that her actions cause predictable responses:

When she shakes a rattle, it makes a noise; when she smiles, you smile back. She's also developing the ability to take in information received from two senses at the same time (such as seeing you talk to her as she listens to your voice).

Tip: Give her a chance to make things happen. She'll be fascinated by small items she can grab -- plastic keys, soft balls with bells inside them. She also likes listening to music as she plays and will gravitate toward toys that make noise and light up.

Be mindful: Make sure visits from friends and family are short: Four- to 6-month-olds enjoy some social interaction, but they can get overstimulated by too much of it. You should also try to maintain a consistent daily routine to prevent fussiness.

### **7 to 8 months**

His fine motor skills improve greatly at this age, and he'll insist on investigating anything he can get his hands on. It will also dawn on him that words have specific meanings; he'll begin to understand the most common ones he hears.

Tip: Give him lots of textured toys that he can manipulate and hold.

Begin telling him the names of as many items as possible as he plays with them.

Be mindful: Telling him "no" too many times will hamper his love of exploration. So be sure to put away any dangerous or breakable objects, and make your child's environment is baby-proof.

### **9 to 12 months**

She'll incorporate all her senses and motor skills to determine how things work. Her word comprehension will explode during this time.

Tip: Mobile and very curious, your baby needs to be able to explore without too much restraint. Let her open and close cabinets, empty drawers, and dump toy buckets (with your close supervision); these activities will expand her ability to process information. Also, improve her vocabulary by narrating while you play with her ("We're emptying this green tub") and by reading to her often.

Be mindful: Experts say that the high-pitched singsong tone moms use (called motherese) naturally to communicate helps babies learn how to talk and comprehend.

Babies do need exposure to lots of language. Simple things like talking and reading to your baby -- which most parents do naturally -- can be a good way to introduce your child to language.

Remember to be sensitive to your child's interests and needs. Some kids like a lot of stimulation -- from activities, reading, games -- while

others don't. By observing your child, you can gauge his capacity for stimulation.

## **Specific ways you can stimulate infant brain**

### **development:**

- ♥ Make eye contact. Take advantage of those brief moments when your newborn's eyes are open, and look right into them. Infants recognize faces early on -- and yours is the most important! Each time he stares at you, he's building his memory.
- ♥ Stick out your tongue. Studies show that newborns as young as 2 days old can imitate simple facial movements -- it's a sign of very early problem solving.
- ♥ Have your baby stare at himself in the mirror. At first, he may think he's just eyeing another cute kid, but he'll love making the "other" baby wave his arms and smile.
- ♥ Hold up two pictures about 8 to 12 inches away from your baby's face. They should be similar but have one small difference (perhaps a tree is in one but not the other). Even a young infant will look back and forth and figure out the

distinguishing features, which sets the stage for letter recognition and reading later on.

- ♥ Encourage communication. Whenever baby babbles or coos, repeat the sound she makes, then give her the chance to respond. This shows her that what she's saying is important to you and encourages reciprocal communication.
- ♥ Stroke the backs of baby's knuckles with a rattle to develop their fine motor skills. Then, as his fingers open, place it gently in his palm. In the beginning, he won't be able to hold it very long, but the experience of holding and dropping it will let him practice for later play.
- ♥ Invest in a baby gym with dangling toys. Placing your baby under the arch and encouraging her to bat at the toys is wonderful practice for hand-eye coordination.
- ♥ Chatter away. All you may get is a blank look, but leave short pauses where your baby would speak. Soon she'll catch on to the rhythm of conversation and start filling in the blanks.

- ♥ Sing songs. Learn as many tunes as you can, or make up your own verses ("This is the way we change your diaper, change your diaper, change your diaper . . . "). Play Bach, the Beatles, or Garth Brooks. Research suggests that learning the rhythms of music is linked to learning math. It is also thought that if your child is exposed to nursery rhymes early in life, it lays many foundations for learning to read.
- ♥ Make sure your baby plays on his tummy. It's crucial for helping him strengthen his back, shoulder, arm, and hand muscles.
- ♥ Tickle her toes. In fact, tickle her all over. Laughter is the first step in developing a sense of humor. Playing games like "This little piggy" (finish by tickling her under the chin) or "I'm gonna get you" teaches your child to anticipate events.  
  
Let loose with gaga talk. Your baby really tunes in to your silly cooing and high-pitched baby talk.
- ♥ Shift your baby's positions frequently. When an infant learns to play in a new position, such as on her side, her motor skills are challenged in different ways and develop more thoroughly.

- ♥ Be a funny face. Puff up your cheeks, and have your toddler touch your nose. When she does, poof! Have her pull your ear, and then stick out your tongue. Make a funny noise when she pats your head. Keep to the same routine three or four times, then change the rules to keep her guessing.
- ♥ Joke around. Play silly nonsense games to build a sense of humor and allow them to have a good chuckle.
- ♥ Talk about what you're doing. When you announce, "I'm going to turn on the light now" before flipping the switch, you're teaching cause and effect.
- ♥ Label items with colours, you'll be amazed how quickly they can learn them. "Look at the yellow bucket", "Let's pick the red apple".
- ♥ Make the most of diaper time. Use moments on the changing pad to teach body parts or pieces of clothing, and singing nursery rhymes. Narrate to help your baby learn to anticipate routines.

- ♥ Breast-feed, if possible. Nursing (breastfeeding or bottle feeding) is a great time to bond with your infant by singing, talking, or simply stroking that delicious baby hair.
- ♥ Turn off the TV and too much constant background noise. Your baby's brain needs one-on-one interaction that no TV show, no matter how educational, can provide.
- ♥ Take time out. Spend a few minutes each day simply sitting on the floor with your baby -- no music, bright lights, or playful tricks. Let him explore, and see where he takes you.
- ♥ Build an obstacle course. Boost motor skills by placing sofa cushions, pillows, boxes, or toys on the floor and then showing your baby how to crawl over, under, and around the items.
- ♥ Let your baby do things by herself. This allows her to practice her skills and promotes independence.
- ♥ Be a playground. Lie down on the floor, and let your baby climb and crawl all over you. It's cheaper than a jungle gym and lots more fun! You'll help boost her coordination and problem-solving skills.

- ♥ Dance to music and bop around with your baby on your hip (safely of course). Teach her to twist and shout, do the funky chicken, or twirl like a ballerina.
- ♥ Play "follow the leader." Crawl through the house, varying your speed. Stop at interesting places to play.
- ♥ Now follow his lead. As your baby gets older, he'll stretch his creativity to see if you really will do everything he does, like make silly noises, crawl backward, or laugh.
- ♥ When your baby plays, make sure her back and shoulders are supported so she can concentrate on making her fingers work.
- ♥ Explore new surroundings and share the view. Take your baby on walks in a front carrier, sling, or backpack, and narrate what you see -- "That's a little dog" or "Look at those big trees!" or "Did you hear that fire engine?" -- to give your baby endless vocabulary-building opportunities.
- ♥ Change the scenery. Switch your baby's high chair to the other side of the table. You'll challenge his memory of where things are placed at meals.

- ♥ Go shopping. When you need a break from your song and dance, visit the supermarket. The faces, sounds, and colors there provide perfect baby entertainment.
- ♥ Let your baby make a mess. It's great practice for little fingers.
- ♥ Practice three-card monte. Grab a few empty plastic food containers, and hide one of your baby's small toys under one. Shuffle the containers, and let him find the prize.
- ♥ Surprise her. Every now and then, delight your baby by gently blowing on her face, arms, or tummy. Make a pattern out of your breaths, and watch her react and anticipate.
- ♥ Play peekaboo. Your hide-and-seek antics do more than bring on the giggles. Your baby learns that objects (including you) can disappear and then come back.
- ♥ Play pick it up. Even if it seems like your baby repeatedly drops toys off her high chair just to drive you nuts, go fetch. She's learning and testing the laws of gravity. Give her several pieces of wadded-up paper or some tennis balls, put an open bucket under her seat, and let her take aim!

- ♥ Get some cheap tissue boxes. If your baby loves pulling tissues out of the box, let him! For a few cents, you've got sensory playthings that he can crumple or smooth out. Hide small toys under them, and thrill your tot when you "find" them again.
- ♥ Poking holes is the best way to help your child learn to use each of her fingers independently, so invest in some clay and let her poke to her heart's content.
- ♥ Enrich baby's sense of touch. Keep a box of different-textured fabrics: silk, terrycloth, wool, and linen. Gently rub the cloths on your baby's cheek, feet, and tummy, describing the way each feels.
- ♥ Walk around the house with your babe in arms, and touch his hand to the cool window, some soft laundry, a smooth plant leaf, and other safe objects, labeling items as you go.
- ♥ Massage her with a gentle touch while telling her what you are doing.
- ♥ Let your child play with her food. When she's ready, serve foods that vary in texture -- including cooked peas, cereal,

pasta, or chunks of cantaloupe. She'll get to practice her pincer grasp and explore her senses.

- ♥ Dedicate each week to a letter of the alphabet. For instance, read books that start with A, eat A foods, cut up snacks into that shape, and write the letter on your sidewalk with chalk.
- ♥ Read books. Again and again and again! Scientists have found that babies as young as 8 months can learn to recognize the sequence of words in a story when it's read 2 or 3 times in a row -- this is believed to help them learn language.
- ♥ Count everything. Count how many blocks your toddler can stack. Or the number of steps in your house. Or his fingers and toes. Make a habit of counting out loud, and soon he'll join in.
- ♥ Go to the library. Take advantage of storytime, puppet shows, and rows and rows of books.
- ♥ Tell tall tales. Choose her favorite story -- replace the main character with her name to make it fun.
- ♥ Make a family album. Include photographs of relatives near and far, and flip through it often to build your child's memories.

When Grandpa calls, show him his picture as he listens on the phone.

- ♥ Together, watch old home videos of your baby enjoying her first bath, learning to roll over, playing with Grandpa . . .

Narrate the story to build language and memory.

- ♥ Create a zoo book. On your next visit, take photos of favorite animals to include in an album. Later, "read" it together, naming all the familiar creatures or adding animal sounds and stories. You can do this with many other experiences and outings you take.

- ♥ Make a mug-shot memory game. Take close-up pictures of all the important people in your child's life, get double prints -- and you've got a set of matching cards. Lay them face up on the floor, and help her find the two that are alike. As she gets older, you can alter the memory game by starting with the photos facedown. Other bought cards are fine, but babies enjoy this game as they can directly relate to the people in the photos.

- ♥ Play hardworking games. During the second 6 months, babies become more active play partners, Continue stimulating speech with games that involve chanting or rhyming, such as "This Little Piggy," "Patty Cake," "The Wheels on the Bus," and "Ring Around the Rosy." Multitasking activities such as these teach sequences of actions and words; encourage baby to participate with movement, whether it's swaying to the sound or incorporating hand motions and improving motor skills.
- ♥ Remember: It's not a good time to play if your baby's drowsy, crabby, or hungry. Signs baby isn't ready to play are he'll turn his face or his entire body away from you, divert eye contact, or arch his back. Respect these signals and try again once they've had a good rest.
- ♥ When you reach the end of a book, find the patience to read it again. Each time you do, your baby sharpens her memory skills, and it's a delight for her when she can predict what's on the next page.

- ♥ Use sign language to communicate with your baby before he ever speaks. You'll be lending his intelligence a helping hand.
- ♥ Give your baby time alone. They need some downtime to amuse themselves, play with toys, or crawl.
- ♥ Snuggle up! Once your baby knows that you'll always meet his needs in a loving and reliable way, he'll have the drive to explore on his own. So carry and cuddle him, and make plenty of eye contact. One thing that motivates children to learn to talk is wanting to connect with other people. That's why little kids want to show Mommy a flower or point out the stars to Grandma. They want to create a bond.

## **How Affection Can Make Your Baby Smarter**

Affection between you and your baby is the most important tool in developing his brain. The activities that make your baby feel secure and loved build his intelligence.

As any parent will attest, nothing is more extraordinary -- or joyful -- than the moment you realize that your baby has fallen in love with you. At 2 to 4 months, your child seems to become more intensely involved with you. She may look longingly into your eyes, flash a radiant smile at the sound of your voice, or wiggle in anticipation when she hears you approaching.

By 5 months, she has developed a wide variety of ways to express her affection. These include responding to your smiles with a big one of her own, initiating interactions with loving looks and smiles, making sounds or moving her mouth, arms, legs, or body in rhythm with your movements, relaxing or growing less fussy when you hold or rock her, cooing when she is held, touched, looked at, or spoken

to and looking at your face with rapt interest and looking uneasy or sad when you withdraw in the midst of playing with her.

Those back-and-forth smiles, frowns, giggles, and body movements are helping your baby develop a host of crucial qualities -- from intelligence and language ability to a well-formed sense of self.

By responding to his signals, you give meaning to his experiences and let him know that his actions have an impact. As he plays with you, he is taking the first steps toward creative and rational thinking.

## **Diet and your baby's intelligence**

Breastmilk is the best baby food you can get for baby's brain development. If you choose to breastfeed, you are the only source of nutrition for your baby. Since your baby's development is continuing rapidly at this time, it is critical that you are getting enough Omega-3 DHA to supply your baby with enough for optimal growth, without depleting your reserves to critical levels.

If formula feeding, ensure you have an iron fortified formula. Iron, iodine and omega fatty acids are all key components in brain development.

Once your baby is on solids, lay the foundation for a healthy diet by introducing them to plenty of freshly pureed fruits and vegetables.

Expose their taste buds early to fruits and vegetables to try to encourage future healthy eating habits.

## **Environment for Developing A Smart Baby**

Your best strategy for building an environment to develop a smart baby is to provide a safe, loving environment that encourages your baby to explore freely. This is an important way for him to learn about the world around him.

Create a positive environment. Latch the medicine cabinet, cover electrical outlets, and put breakables up high to let your little one safely explore her world. This means you spend less time saying "no" and more time saying "yes". If a child keeps getting told 'no,' she'll stop exploring and problem solving," she says.

Babies and more so toddlers who physically explore their environment, engage socially with other children, and verbally interact with adults are likely to have better foundations for optimum brain growth.

The toys we buy our children, from babies' rattles and mobiles to the TV DVDs and brain building software have proved controversial.

There is no need to spend a fortune on toys. All infants are eager to learn. Give your baby simple activities and toys that involve building, such as stickle bricks or building blocks, to develop creativity in the brain. Toys like this will also help your child grasp the basic concepts of maths and physics.

Choose developmentally appropriate toys that allow your baby to explore and interact. Toys such as a windup jack-in-the-box or stackable blocks help your baby learn cause-and-effect relationships and 'if-then' reasoning. If a baby stacks a big block on a smaller one, the top block falls off. If he successfully stacks a small block on a bigger one, he 'wires in' the information.

## **In Summary**

Become a passionate advocate of stimulating your baby, and hence his or her brain, from the earliest possible opportunity.

Remember the saying “use it or lose it”, because only the synapses wired together through this kind of parent-child interaction are retained.

Forget the high-tech gizmos, language flash cards, and "required" hours of classical music. It turns out that the things babies need most -- attention and affection from parents and caregivers -- come naturally in most families.

In fact, the greatest gift we can give is time – to touch, sing to, bond and play with our children. Nature will take care of the rest.

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