

## Parenting Infants, Toddlers, and Young Children

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Brain development and early experiences in the young child.

A baby's early relations and experiences are huge influences on the way the brain develops. During the first three years of life, the brain is forming connections that will determine a lifetime of skills and potential learning abilities. Recent research has led to a confusing variety of new toys, activities, books, and curriculum materials being promoted in the name of early learning.

But how you play with, care for, and talk with your baby and toddler is even more important than the activities and toys that you provide. Here are a couple of simple things you can do to help your child's brain grow and thrive.

### Provide warm responsive care:

Talk to me, hug me, play with me, and respond to my needs.

Smile at me, and make me feel important and secure.

Sensitive, predictable and responsive care is most important for healthy early development.

### Handle with care:

Cuddle me, cradle me, and hold me close. Let me know that I am loved. Hugs help me to learn to trust and handle stress now and when I grow.

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This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.

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