



*Most of the
connections in the
brain do not happen
until a child is born.*

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Child Abuse Prevention Fund
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Brain development

Birth to 3 are critical years for brain development

Research supports that your relationship with your child affects her brain in so many ways and this relationship is critical to their development. Children experience the world through the adults in their life.

The brain is a network of millions of neurons. Babies are born with these neurons but they have not yet formed the complex network of connections that make up the mature brain.

From birth to three, different experiences can cause this network to develop in different

ways. Babies experience life through our response with them. They see the expressions on your face, they hear the way in which you speak to them, they respond to the way you touch them. Each one of these connections enables the brain and the child to fully develop.

Imagine the capacity you have as a parent to make every opportunity you have to spend with your children one that affects brain development.

What parents can do

- Care for your child's physical needs in a loving and responsive manner. Vital communication occurs during routine interactions such as feeding, holding, comforting and changing diapers.
- Pay close attention and respond to your child's verbal and nonverbal messages. Babies communicate through the sounds they make, the way they move and the expressions on their faces.
- Share language with your child by talking, reading and singing. Talking to children who can't understand you is not a waste of effort. It is through these early conversations that a child's language capacity grows.
- Encourage your child's learning through safe exploration and play. One of the best ways to unlock a child's learning potential is to provide an environment full of sights, sounds, tastes and smells.
- Establish a routine for your child. Routines associated with pleasurable feelings are reassuring for children and help to create important neural connections. Daily positive experience also gives your child a sense of security.