



Your Young Child's Brain: How Does it Develop?

The brain grows and changes a lot during early childhood (0-6 years). When children are young, the brain also grows and connections strengthen within the brain. These connections help the brain's different parts communicate with each other and with the rest of the body.

1319 Colony Street, Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1

Bus. 306.651.4300

Fax. 306.651.4301

www.skprevention.ca

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What is Happening in My Baby's Brain *(Continued)*

Because there is so much growth in the brain during early childhood, adults have an opportunity to influence brain development in good ways and in bad ways.

How can I make a difference in my young child's brain development?

Just as parents feed their children healthy foods so that their bodies can grow and develop to their fullest potential, parents can also provide healthy experiences so that their children's brains develop to their fullest. A child's brain develops in a "use-dependent" fashion. This means that experiences in early childhood shape the way our brain grows, works and communicates. The more stimulating and loving experiences a child is provided with, the more influence these experiences will have on the child's brain development.

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How can I help my child's brain develop?

- Love my child no matter what (unconditional love)
- Learn how to behave in a way that will promote secure attachment
- Provide safe, appropriate touch through cuddling, hugging, holding, feeding, and rocking
- Respond to my child's needs in a consistent and sensitive manner
- Create routines for day-to-day activities
- Provide consistent care
- Provide new experiences and environments to safely explore
- Be a safe haven that my child can return to after exploring
- Follow my child's cues regarding when to play and learn and when to be calm and restful
- Praise my child, be specific about what and why
- Set boundaries and rules and reinforce these in a calm, kind and respectful way
- Encourage play