

#	Age & Stage	Theme	Title
6	0-2 months	Your role as a parent	Did you know that your newborn needs your loving care to develop a healthy brain?

Parents are the baby's most important connection to the world in the first few years of life. Right from birth, babies can learn from and connect to others. Here is how you can help:

- ◆ Full-term babies are born with basic brain functions. They are able to breathe, sleep, eat and so on. In order to develop more complex skills, the brain needs to be stimulated often, in a repetitive, predictable, back-and-forth kind of way. This fires up the neurons in your baby's brain and causes it to develop.
- ◆ Parents need to provide lots of warmth and attention to set up these early brain connections. With every interaction, you are helping to develop your baby's brain. Do lots of little things with your baby:
 - Respond to your baby.
 - Talk and sing to your baby.
 - Touch and play with your baby.
 - Learn to follow your baby's cues.
 - Help your baby see and touch new things.
 - Show your baby a variety of people, animals, plants and things. Talk about what you are showing your baby.
 - Repeat the sounds your baby makes as if you were having a conversation with them.
 - Repeat the same action or game over and over, as long as your baby shows interest.
 - Cuddle your baby, providing the physical connection they need.
- ◆ Your baby depends on you! It is important to respond affectionately every time your baby needs you, 24 hours a day. Night time can be particularly frightening for babies! Comforting a crying baby, even when you want them to go to sleep, lets them know they are loved and safe.
- ◆ If a baby cries, it is because they need something, even if it is just for you to hold them for a few minutes.

With every little word and gesture, you will strengthen new connections in your baby's growing brain. You will help your baby learn to think and feel secure.

Links

- ◆ *Brain – Parents*. Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development. www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/brain-children/key-messages.html
- ◆ *I'm a Dad*. Dad Central. www.dadcentral.ca/dads