



Develop Your Child's Full Potential

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The following tips for parents and others caring for infants and young children were designed to help children develop to their full potential. Research shows that interactions and experiences in the first six years of life have significant impact on a child's future development.*

Taking care of yourself when you are pregnant is taking care of your baby.

- 100 Billion brain cells are created in your baby during pregnancy; so when you take care of yourself, you are helping your baby's growth.
- Eat only healthy food, including lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and protein.
- Understand that drugs, alcohol, and smoke can seriously harm your unborn baby.
- Rest and light exercise are important for your health.
- Visit your doctor or nurse-midwife monthly, beginning as soon as you think you are pregnant.
- Take prenatal vitamins and folic acid throughout your pregnancy.
- Drink plenty of water and fewer drinks with caffeine.
- Have a dentist check your teeth.
- Avoid people who are sick.
- Ask questions and read to make sure you understand what you need to do to have a healthy baby.

Make sure your children know they are loved.

- Show hugs, smiles and kisses and by talking and looking directly into your baby's eyes.
- Remember that your baby cries to communicate to you.
- Giving attention to a baby is not spoiling; when you respond to your baby's cries and coos consistently, her learning is stimulated and he begins to trust.
- Imitate her coos and sounds—diaper changing, feeding, bathing and dressing are great times to talk with your child.

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- Say your child's name in a cheerful, caring voice and really listen when she talks.
- Say "yes" and "I love you" more often than "no" and "don't".
- Demonstrate in ways she can understand that she is unique and special to you.
- Seek help from specialists if you have concerns about your child's development or need extra help during times of family stress.

Remain calm and discipline with love and consistency

- Discipline should teach—it is setting limits with both firmness and kindness.
- Show respect for your child so that he will learn to respect others.
- Learn about the stages of child development so that you will know what behavior you can expect at different ages.
- Prepare your child for new situations, so that he will feel confident and secure.
- Create dependable, predictable routines for your child.
- It is normal for infants and toddlers to test limits—it demonstrates curiosity and eagerness to learn.
- Redirect and distract your child's attention when her behavior is annoying.
- Avoid calling your child negative names when discussing behavior.
- Effective discipline teaches children to think about their actions and understand right from wrong. Spanking, hitting and yelling do not teach right from wrong.

Talk, read, sing, and play with your child everyday

- Talk to your baby even before she seems to understand what you are saying.
- Spend time each day reading to your child from infancy, watching for his cues to continue or quit.
- Talk about pictures and the story in different voices for the characters in a book.
- Singing and listening to music are good for your child's development.
- Have a safe place for your baby or toddler to roll, crawl, and explore.
- Sit and play on the floor with your child daily.
- Encourage strong bodies and minds by including outdoor play such as running, climbing, swinging and sliding regularly.
- Help your child notice words and other print in the world around her.
- Limit TV time—when your child does watch sit and watch with her.
- Get a library card and visit the library often.

*Information adapted from Early Connections Tips Packet

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