

Brain Development



Help Me Grow Minnesota

How to Encourage a Child's Brain Development

Children's brains develop rapidly from ages birth through three. Brain development affects all areas of a child's growth.

There are four main areas of development: motor (physical), language and communication, social and emotional, and cognitive. Brain development is part of cognitive development. Cognitive development describes how a child's intellect grows, and includes thinking, learning and problem-solving skills. These skills affect all other areas of development.

The first three years of a child's life are critical for learning and development. Many parents ask how they can help their child's brain develop. The best way is to actively engage your child through everyday activities like playing, reading and being there when he/she feels stress.

Here are ideas to encourage brain development:

Play

Play is a wonderful way to help a baby or toddler's brain develop. Play might be a game, talking or singing to actively engage your child's brain. "Peek-a-boo" and holding toys out to watch help a baby's brain develop. Talk to your baby about what you are doing. For toddlers, sing songs with actions, like "Wheels on the Bus," encourage pretend play, color and build with blocks and toys. These foster imagination and creativity.

Comfort

Babies can feel stress. Hold and cuddle your baby. Let him/her know you are there to comfort and help them when they feel stress. Studies show that responsive, loving and supportive care helps babies handle stress better than if care is inconsistent.

Read

Reading is one of the best ways to promote a child's brain development. Even before he/she can recognize letters or words, reading kick starts language and communication skills. Hearing words and seeing pictures connects the two in a child's mind. Repeating the same books further builds recognition between the words you speak and the images on the page. As a child grows, ask him/her to point to specific pictures on the page, like "Where is the dog?"

There are many ways you can help, encourage and support your child's brain development as he/she grows. For more ideas, visit our [Encouraging Healthy Development section](#).