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# Dangers to the Baby's Brain

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## Before the Baby Is Born

Drinking, Smoking, or drug use can damage your baby's brain. The effects range from learning problems to death.

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## Stress

Fear in a baby actually kills brain cells. A baby who gets scared often develops slowly. He may grow up too active and uncontrolled.

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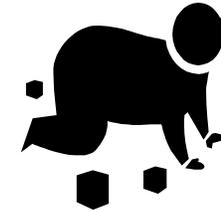
## Shaking

Some parents shake their babies to make them quiet. This damages the baby's brain. This can cause mental retardation, fits, or death.

These ideas are from *The First Years Last Forever* and your local Kiwanis club.



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# YOUR BABY'S BRAIN



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# Your Baby's Brain

Long before your baby is born, his brain starts growing. And the brain keeps growing for more than five years after birth. Your child can learn throughout his life, but there are special opportunities in the early years.

The brain is made up of billions of brain cells and trillions of connections between them. The more connections the brain cells make and use, the more the brain can do.

Your baby's brain develops in response to what happens around her. And to what the baby does. Playing with the baby helps the brain grow. Making the baby feel safe helps the brain grow.

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## You Can Help

There are many things you can do to help your baby's brain grow.

### Before the Baby Is Born

- See a doctor for checkups.
- Eat nutritious meals.
- Buy an infant seat that fits your car.

### Keep Your Baby Healthy

- Take your baby to doctor checkups.
- Get all the baby's shots.
- Breast-feed if possible.
- Baby-proof your home using a home-safety checklist.

### Respond to Your Child

- React to his moods.
- Listen to her.
- Play when he wants you to.
- Help she feel safe.
- Show that you care.

### Talk and Sing

- Tell the baby what he's doing.
- Tell what you're doing as you work.
- Sing and play music.
- Tell stories
- Read books.

### Provide Toys

*They don't need to be expensive!*

- Crayons and paper
- Stuffed animals
- Blocks
- Building Toys
- Balls
- Noisemakers
- Costumes
- Dolls
- Toy people
- Trucks and cars
- Planes
- Pots and pans



### Help Your Child Explore

- Take her outside to play.
- Let him run, jump, and scream.
- Play with her in sand and puddles.
- Help him play with others.
- Help settle arguments.

### Provide Guidance

- Let her say what she feels.
- Explain what you want him to do (not just what he shouldn't do).
- Describe your rules.
- Explain what will happen if she breaks the rules.
- Point out when he hurts others.

Show that you love her even when you dislike her behavior.

### Control Your Home

- Do the same things each time for bedtime, naptime, and meals.
- Limit television and help choose shows.

### Get Involved in Child Care and Preschool

- Talk to the care giver regularly.
- Learn what is happening each day.
- Attend class with your child.

### Remember Every Child Is Different

- Every child grows up at his own speed.
- Every child has her own personality.
- Every child can succeed.

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## If You Need Child Care

### Look for a Child-Care Center with:

- A low number of children per adult.
- Smaller groups of children.
- A well educated staff.
- Additional training for staff.
- Low staff turnover.
- Higher pay for staff.

### Look for a Family Child-Care Provider who:

- Likes taking care of children.
- Knows how children learn and grow.
- Is educated.
- Gets training in child care.
- Plans activities for the kids.
- Is licensed.
- Has fewer kids for each adult.
- Charges more.
- Worries about safety.