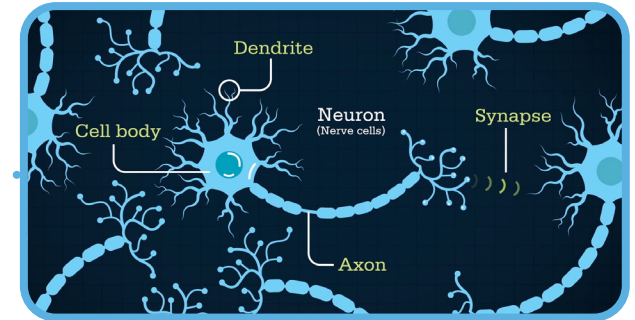


Your Baby's Amazing Brain

When your baby was born, you counted their fingers and toes. But you couldn't count the billions of brain cells they had!

How does your baby explore and interact with you and their world?



Scientists study brain activity. They understand how your baby's brain grows and changes during their first few years of life. **You are very important in this process!**

How the brain works

The basic building block of the brain is a cell called a neuron. Brain cells must connect with other neurons to work. This connection is a synapse. Your baby forms trillions of these connections before birth and in their early years.

At birth, your baby is able to breathe, hear, and suck because of the connections in the brain.

Transmitting information

Neurons send information throughout the body in the form of electrical signals. This information comes from your baby's experiences. As you feed, hold, touch, and talk to them, you are sending important information to their brain.

The brain forms connections. It also gets rid of connections that aren't used. This helps the brain work efficiently. Neurons that are used continuously over time form a pathway. This lets signals travel faster. This connection gets stronger.

Brain maturity

Your baby's brain can juggle many tasks at the same time. Researchers say this is similar to air traffic controllers managing airplanes, and it is called executive functioning.

Around age 3, these skills will start to develop more quickly. They will help them control their emotions, plan ahead, and use what they have already learned.

Nature and nurture

Genes play a role in your baby's brain development and potential. But so do the opportunities you give them.

You can help your child's brain grow during these first few years. Your baby is eager for the experiences you give them.

They are curious about the world. Learn to read their signals. Notice what they are curious about. Help them explore and grow.

Why your baby needs fat

Your baby's brain has a fatty layer called **myelin**. This develops during their life to cover the neurons.

Fat found in breast milk or properly prepared formula helps myelin to form. They need this "good" fat to help their brain develop.



Take time to watch your child.

How does your baby show you they are ready for a rest?

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Your baby's brain is changing so much right now. They depend on you to provide a safe place for them to grow. They need you to encourage their curiosity. A warm, nurturing relationship with you is important for them now and in the future.

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What is surprising to you about how your baby's brain works and develops?

How you can help:

- > Hold, touch, and talk to your baby lovingly every day.
- > Feed your baby breast milk or properly prepared formula.
- > Protect your baby against brain damage from head injuries and lead poisoning.
- > Read and sing with your baby. Play with them.
- > Practice new sounds, words, and body movements over and over.
- > Meet your baby's needs quickly and lovingly.
- > Watch for new things your baby does. Give them the chance to practice the new things.

