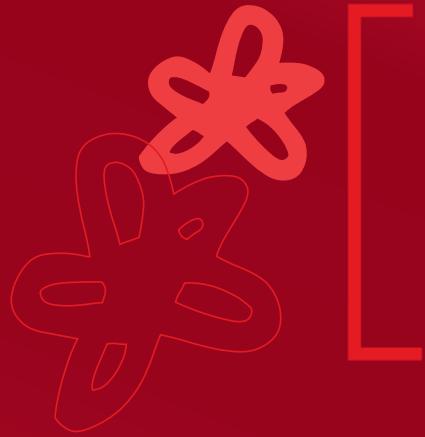


PARENTS

Eyes on



Your child's brain

Building a strong structure

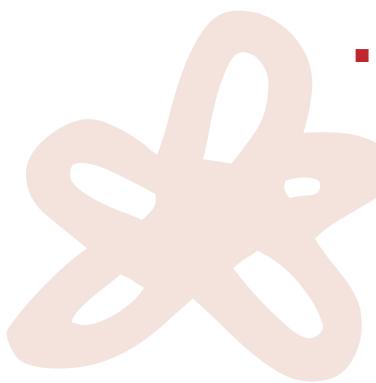


Centre of Excellence
for Early Childhood
Development

STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE
CLUSTER ON EARLY
child development



"In the first few years of life, 700 new brain connections are made every second."



What do we know?

- Your child's brain develops very quickly. From birth to age two, his brain increases from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ the weight of an adult brain.
- Your child's brain is like a house – it has its own special structure. The structure of your child's brain is shaped by the interactions between his genes and his experiences. If the structure is strong, this will promote healthy brain development.
- The regions of your child's brain that control his movements and senses (e.g., touch, smell, sight, hearing and taste) are affected by information passed on through his genes and present in his environment.
- Your child's brain is very active. In the first few years of life, 700 new brain connections are made every second. These new connections make complex networks. These networks change over time so that the brain becomes more efficient in taking on more jobs and more complex functions.
- Different areas and functions of the brain work together in many ways. For example, the networks that help your child to hear will also help him to acquire language.
- If your child's brain development is healthy, he will be more likely to:
 - Have a healthy body.
 - Show appropriate behaviour.
 - Be ready to learn other skills.
 - Control his behaviour.

Paying attention to...

... helping your child to develop his brain when it has the most impact. Different parts of the brain develop at different ages. Some parts of the brain develop when your child is very young.

... being aware of how flexible your child's brain is. His brain is affected by what goes on around him and his relationships with others.

... making the most of your child's early years to help his brain develop in the healthiest possible way.

... building a secure and trusting relationship with your child. This will promote a healthy brain structure.

What can be done?

- Stimulate your child's senses. Let him experience new sounds, food and objects. This will help develop his senses and build the structure of his brain.

- Play with your child. Be a caring parent to your child. These are early actions you can take to help your child's brain to develop in a healthy way.

- Nurture and comfort your child. Interact with him and be responsive. Show your child that he can trust you to be supportive and to take care of him when he needs food or comfort.



Information

This Key Message is a publication of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) and the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development (SKC-ECD). These organizations identify and summarize the best scientific work on early childhood development. They disseminate this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of brain development, consult our synthesis and experts' articles (Brain and Importance of Early Childhood Development topics) in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

Coordinators:

Mélanie Joly
Lucie Beaupré

Collaborators:

Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)
Claire Gascon Giard
Rosanne Aléong

Copy editors:

Valérie Bell
Lana Crossman

Graphic design:

DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

GRIP-Université de Montréal

P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville

Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7

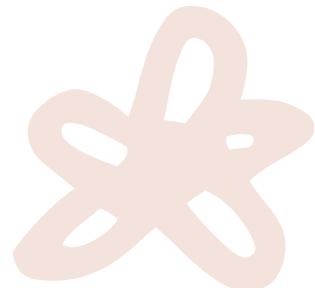
Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2541

Fax: 514.343.6962

E-mail: cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca

Website: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

In this document, the masculine form is used merely to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.



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et André Chagnon

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