

FACTFILE: GCSE HOME ECONOMICS: Child Development



Healthy Brain Development in the Womb

Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- Discuss healthy brain development in the womb.

Additional information can be found at the Public Health Agency campaign – Getting to know your baby.

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Getting%20to%20know%20your%20baby%20leaflet%2008_14.pdf

How is the brain developing?

The unborn baby's brain is developing rapidly during the last three months of pregnancy. At this age the fetus can kick, swallow and react to sound and light. The unborn baby will begin to recognise the mother's routine and may even begin to kick more when hearing the start of a regularly watched TV programme.



How can parents help with healthy brain development?

The 'Getting to know you' campaign by The Public Health Agency recommends the following to help support the baby's early brain development:

- The mother should take time to relax, during pregnancy and they should think about the baby. Some mothers will have imagined what their baby will look like and the personality they will have.
- The mother should touch their bump in response to the baby's movements.
- The mother and partner are encouraged to sing and talk to the unborn baby throughout pregnancy. This will help the baby become familiar with their voice.

These tips not only will help the baby's brain development but will help a close bond to be built with the mother which may help the mental health of the baby.

BBC news has reported there is a link between brain development and events during pregnancy and birth.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-21880017>

Food and healthy brain development

Pregnant women are advised to take a 400 microgram supplement of folic acid before conception and throughout the first three months of pregnancy. Folic acid helps the normal brain function.

Vitamin B1 (thiamine) is found in fortified breakfast cereal and eggs. This is essential for healthy brain development.

Vitamin B6 is found in bread and chicken. This helps to develop the brain.



Oily fish are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids. Examples include salmon, mackerel and fresh tuna. These will help the baby's brain development. Pregnant women should be careful to follow the guidelines as no more than two portions of oily fish should be eaten in a week as they contain high levels of mercury which can harm the baby's developing nervous system.

**Link your Learning**

Understand the current government nutritional advice for pregnant women.

Learning activity

Make a leaflet with tips for expectant mothers on how they can help with healthy brain development in the womb.

