

[IMAGE]

Raising Baby Einstein

By Bill Reddy

Infant intelligence is a combination of heredity and environment. You want to give your child everything they need to excel in life. But are videos and modern toys boosting your baby's IQ? Here are a few ways to raise a smart baby.

Pregnancy is a time of great expectation, of new beginnings and the excitement of bringing life into the world. Wouldn't it be nice to know some of the latest techniques from clinical neurobiology to potentially increase the IQ of your unborn child?

What Is IQ?

First of all, what exactly is IQ? It stands for Intelligence Quotient, and is your mental age divided by your chronological age (x100). An 8-year-old child whose mental age is also 8 has an IQ of 100, which is considered average. An IQ test typically measures verbal, spatial and quantitative/analytical ability. The "quotient" was the original way intelligence was defined, but more advanced tests and statistical methods are used today. Recent studies have shown that IQ is **not** a fixed numerical value diminishing with age, but rather one that is "plastic" or variable depending on the intellectual stimulation of the individual.

Baby sitting next to a chess set. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Preconception care in America is aimed at reducing risk of birth defects and disease - not maximizing the intellectual potential of your unborn child. We can increase our IQ as we age by challenging ourselves with new skills, such as learning a new language or taking piano lessons. (Of course, having an intelligent spouse is also a great leap forward in producing a gifted child.) This article will focus on prenatal nutrition, supplementation and lifestyle changes to maximize your child's intelligence.

Healthy Parents Make Healthy Babies

The most critical element in a newborn's health is the overall health of the parents. Maternal health is addressed in the majority of medical literature, but poor *paternal* health and subsequent sperm quality can compromise the future mental health of a child, increasing the probability of schizophrenia, autism and

Down syndrome. A common-sense approach would be for the mother and father to eliminate smoking, caffeine, drug and alcohol use, and reduce the mother's exposure to heavy metals, solvents, cleaning products, MSG, aspartame and processed foods leading up to and during pregnancy. An organic diet for both parents would be the optimal way to go.

Drugs to Avoid

Certain drugs are known to complicate pregnancy, birth and the health of your child. For example, epileptic seizure drugs such as Dilantin or phenobarbital create four times the usual risk of producing a baby with heart defects, and antibiotics such as ampicillin or tetracycline may cause heart malformations. Additionally, aspirin has been linked with fetal deformities, bleeding and complications during delivery, and acne drugs such as Accutane reportedly can cause birth defects.

Supplements to Buy

Another key element in fetal development is proper blood flow through the placenta. As we age, our skin and blood vessels become less flexible due to the imbalance between matrix proteins, collagen and elastin. That's why women over age 40 may have a slightly higher incidence of birth defects than younger mothers, and older fathers are linked to more frequent miscarriages and spontaneous abortions. Taking 1,000 mg of the amino acid peptide carnosine per day can reverse the effect of glycation (where glucose binds with proteins to damage tissue elasticity) and increase the flexibility of blood vessels, which will result in reducing high blood pressure. Also, 100 mg of coenzyme Q₁₀ per day can improve tissue oxygenation. Ginkgo biloba is known for its use in improving concentration and blood flow to the brain, but 100 mg three times a day also can improve peripheral blood circulation to the uterus.

A pregnant woman's belly. - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark One surefire way to optimize fetal development is to provide the basic building blocks of neurological tissue: omega-3 fatty acids. A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services study showed that omega-3 fatty acid supplementation increases birth weight and lowers complications of pregnancy such as pre-eclampsia, preterm delivery and gestational hypertension. However, results were inconclusive in terms of the infants' cognitive development. One word of caution: Both ginkgo biloba and omega-3 fatty acids have blood-thinning qualities, so they can be contraindicated for people on blood thinners or aspirin.

The best advice for couples who are planning a family is to take excellent care of themselves. Couples should get plenty of exercise, at least eight hours of sleep each night and quality supplements to improve their health, which in turn, offers their children the best chance at a strong mind and healthy body. Although DVDs, CDs and modern toys may stimulate your baby's brain, nothing can replace the neurobiological components of a healthy mind. Any way you look at it, boosting your child's IQ starts with caring for yourself. Ask your doctor if you are doing everything you can to create a bright future for your baby.

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