

Does dad time with infants boost babies' IQ?

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(HealthDay)—If you're a new father, spending plenty of time with your baby could boost his or her mental development, a new study suggests.

British researchers looked at how 128 [fathers](#) interacted with their infants at 3 months of age. When the kids turned 2, the researchers measured their [mental development](#).

Infants whose fathers were more engaged and active when playing with them in their first few months of life did better on thinking skills tests at age 2 than other [infants](#).

Many factors have a major influence a child's [development](#), and this study wasn't designed to prove a cause-and-effect relationship. But these findings suggest that father-child interactions at a young age are an influencing factor, the researchers said.

The researchers didn't see any differences based on the gender of the baby. Dad's interactions had a positive influence on thinking skills for both boys and girls.

"Even as early as 3 months, these father-child interactions can positively predict [cognitive development](#) almost two years later, so there's something probably quite meaningful for later development, and that really hasn't been shown much before," study leader Paul Ramchandani said in an Imperial College London news release. He is a professor at the school's department of medicine.

Study co-author Vaheshta Sethna said, "We also found that children interacting with sensitive, calm and less anxious fathers during a book session at the age of 2 showed better cognitive development, including attention, problem-solving, language and social skills." She's with the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King's College London.

"Our findings highlight the importance of supporting fathers to interact more positively with their children in early infancy," Sethna said.

She added that sharing positive emotions and reading activities seem to be linked to bigger boosts in the child's [thinking skills](#).

The study was published recently in *Infant Mental Health Journal*.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [child development](#).

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