

Physical and Brain Development: Overview

Teaching Tips:

- This is usually taught as the first module in the Parenting Counts Program. Use the module as an introduction to the importance of brain development and an overview of what will be covered in the program. Use the key messages below as a guide.
- The key to this module is to help parents understand how the development of the brain has an impact on all other physical functions and is critical for the healthy development of a child's social-emotional, cognitive, and language abilities.
- As you teach the content, remember to connect the concepts back to parenting. The physical milestones are a good way to do this as it helps parents relate what is happening in the child's development to their overall abilities.
- Help parents understand that brain development is happening rapidly in the early years and parents can optimize development by providing the child with a variety of experiences as well as support for their emerging physical, emotional and cognitive skills.

Learning Objectives for Parents and Caregivers

After learning about physical and brain development, parents and caregivers will be able to:

- 1) Understand basic brain development
- 2) Relate physical and brain development to social-emotional, cognitive, and language growth and learning
- 3) Implement strategies and tips to help support healthy physical and brain development for children

Key Messages for Parents and Caregivers

- 1) Brain development happens rapidly in children from birth to age 5.
- 2) Brain development is partly genetic, but it is strongly influenced by the environment.
- 3) The brain develops new "circuitry" based on what has already been established.
- 4) New pathways lead to new skills – for example, talking to a newborn baby helps support the development of the parts of the brain that produce language – even though he won't say his first word for a long time.
- 5) Each child develops at his or her own pace.
- 6) Children rely on their parents to have their basic needs met to help their bodies and brains grow and develop.

