

## Rev Your Child's Brain Power With Rhythms

You don't have to watch too many video clips on YouTube of dancing babies to know that little ones have a strong sense of rhythm. And research on babies, such as a recent study through the University of Amsterdam that measured brain activity of a group of infants in response to a pattern of drum beats, continues to mount evidence suggesting that your little tykes can follow and understand rhythms much as adults do.

"It's possible that babies are born with a musical sense because it helps communication," said Henkjan Honing, co-author of the Amsterdam study. And, if you think about it, rhythms *are* basic to almost every form of communication, including conversation, making them vital to childhood development and necessary for rearing the well-adjusted little geniuses you know and love.

That's where you, as parents, come in.

Exposing your children early and often to music and other forms of rhythm can have a positive and permanent effect on the inner workings of their noggins. Translation: You will sharpen their senses and give them an intellectual edge when it comes to navigating life's road from infancy through higher education and beyond.

Nadine Gaab, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Children's Hospital in Boston, said in a recent *USA Today* article that babies can "learn about rhythm from hearing music in the womb, feeling the rhythm of a mother's movements or listening to her heartbeat."

And Daniel Levlin, author of *This is Your Brain on Music*, confirms "the auditory system of the fetus is fully functional about twenty weeks after conception."

So whether babies are born with an innate understanding of rhythm or not, you can help them along. Exactly what can you do to stimulate early learning and a lifetime of music appreciation in your children? Here are a few suggestions:

- Use the BabyPlus curriculum while you're expecting to introduce your baby to the sequential learning process through rhythm.
- Expose your little bundle of joy to music before and after he or she arrives. Levlin said from birth to age five is the opportune time to develop your child's communication skills and musical aptitude. Exposing them to a variety of melodies and rhythms can also enhance your child's listening skills.
- Consider enrolling your child in a weekly pre-school music program where they can experience the joy of having fun with music and song. They won't even know they're working on their brainpower.
- As they get older, nurture any interest they show in playing a musical instrument. There is strong evidence to suggest that students who play musical instruments tend to get better grades in core subjects such as math,

science, reading and language arts, and they do better on standardized tests too.

One more perk to exposing your child to music in the womb: You'll get to play a role in the type of music your baby prefers. Levlin reported that in a study conducted by Alexandra Lamont "babies showed a preference for specific songs played one year after they heard the same song played while they were in the womb."

So whether you're a fan of country, jazz or classic rock n' roll, you choose the music and your child will learn before your very ears.