



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **The First 1000 Days – set your child up for the future (LOVE)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.
- **Please record opening and closing sting**

Topic:

The First 1000 Days – set your child up for the future

Objectives:

- To inform parents/caregivers about the importance of the first 1000 days for the baby's growth and brain development
- To help them understand the importance of health, nutrition and care during pregnancy.
- To inform expectant mothers (and their families) about the importance of clinic visits and other potential support during this period.

- To confirm for them that clinic visits and health care for pregnant women and children under age 6 is free.
- To encourage them to play a significant role in their young child’s development through spending quality time with them, playing and rich use of language.

Introduction

the South African government has released a Draft Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy for public comment. This policy document has come about because the South African government recognises how critically important the early years are and how vital it is to ensure that all young children have the best possible start in life. This will provide the strong foundation to enable each new life to reach his or her potential, and will play an important role in building a successful South African nation. This draft policy document places the spotlight on the importance of the First 1000 Days.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>What is meant by the first 1000 days and what period does this cover?</i></p>	<p>This term ‘The First 1000 Days’ is now accepted all over the world in recognizing the importance of this period of development in a person’s life span. It refers to the period of life from conception (the meeting of the father’s sperm with the mother’s egg) to when the child turns 2. That works out to be 1000 days.</p>
<p>2. <i>Why is this such an important period of life?</i></p>	<p>From the point when the father’s sperm meets the mother’s egg in the womb and a baby is conceived, the baby, including his or her brain, starts to develop very rapidly. This development is strongly influenced to start with by the</p>

<p>3. <i>You mentioned the baby's brain development. How does the brain develop during this period?</i></p>	<p>environment or conditions in the mother's womb, which in turn depend on her health and wellbeing in pregnancy. After the baby is born, her environment, including the love and care she receives, nutritious food, good health and hygiene and early stimulation through talk and play, will strongly influence whether she grows up to be a happy, healthy, well-adjusted person ready to succeed in the world. This is a time when what we do as parents and caregivers will dramatically influence the rest of our child's life. It's a time when we can set our child up for a positive, healthy and successful future!</p> <p>Our brains develop faster in the first 1000 days of life than at any other time in our lives. Critical brain development continues after age 2, but it builds on the foundations laid at the start of life. In the first 18 months of a baby's life, connections in the brain are created at the rate of 1 million per second! So everything the baby sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels and experiences, create and expand these brain connections and eventually lead to your baby's ability to understand, think, make sense of her world, problem solve and interact with others. By the 1000th day of life, at two years of age, your baby's brain will have grown to 80% of his adult brain size. That shows you how important this period is for brain development.</p>
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<p>4. <i>So if the period of pregnancy is so important, what are the first things that must be done if a woman thinks she may be pregnant?</i></p>	<p>The first thing to do is to identify when the woman is pregnant as early as possible. If you think you may be pregnant, visit your clinic as soon as possible and have a pregnancy test. It's important that you do this before you are 14 weeks pregnant so that screening can be done to make sure you and your baby are healthy, and for you to receive the full benefit of free, routine clinic check-ups. For first time mothers, this can be an emotional and scary time, and they will certainly need support from the father, a family member or friend.</p>
<p>5. <i>Did I hear you say that clinic visits, screening for health problems and routine pregnancy check-ups are free?</i></p>	<p>Yes absolutely. That is one of the significant achievements of the South African government since democracy. Health care for pregnant women and children under age 6 is free. So it's important to visit the clinic as soon as you think you may be pregnant and then to follow the programme of check-ups and any other health advice from your healthcare worker. You may also be given free supplements to support the healthy growth of your baby.</p>
<p>6. <i>What are some of the other things a pregnant mother-to-be should do to ensure her baby's health and well-being in the womb?</i></p>	<p>A healthy pregnancy is extremely important for the health and development of the baby growing inside you. Your baby will get his food and nutrition through your body, so it's very important that you eat a wide variety of healthy nutritious food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lots of fresh vegetables such as green leafy vegetables like spinach, kale,

<p>7. <i>And what should pregnant women avoid eating, drinking or ingesting?</i></p>	<p>umfino, cabbage; sweet potato & potatoes; pumpkin, butternut and squash; beans and dried beans; carrots; broccoli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a variety of fresh or dried fruit• protein from chicken, meat, fish, sardines, eggs, soya or legumes is very important.• Calcium from milk or dairy products and dark green leafy vegetables.• drink lots of clean water and limit how much coffee you drink!• And limit how much salt you use. <p>The healthy food you eat, will mean a healthy baby with a healthy developing brain. It will set your baby up for good brain growth, early learning and ability to do well at school; to be happy, friendly and well-adjusted – in other words ready for success from birth.</p> <p>It is extremely important that you do not drink alcohol, smoke, take drugs or dangerous medication while you are pregnant. These are poisonous substances that will damage your baby in your womb. In some parts of South Africa babies are born with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome from their mothers' drinking, which leaves them with brain damage, mentally retarded and often with behaviour problems. If you have a problem stopping any of these things, seek help from your clinic.</p>
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<p>8. <i>So if a healthy pregnancy is so important in giving a baby the best start in life, what happens if mothers-to-be are not healthy, don't eat nutritious food and don't take good care of themselves?</i></p> <p>9. <i>Once the baby is born, what is the most nutritious way to feed him or her?</i></p>	<p>Stress, depression and anxiety can also affect the health of your baby. If you are feeling sad, scared or facing serious problems, do talk to someone – your partner, a family member, a friend, a counsellor, someone from your place of worship, or your community health worker. It helps to talk about or share a problem. Practice deep breathing to help you relax. You can start talking and singing to your baby even in the womb. This can relax mummy and baby!</p> <p>If the pregnant mother-to-be's health and nutrition is poor, it can restrict or damage the baby's development, especially his brain development. This can set your baby up for many problems in later life both in health and intelligence. She may be slow in developing or have developmental delays; do poorly in school and possibly drop out of school early. Often this leads to teenage pregnancy and poor caregiving of the next generation of babies. It also means that with poor education, he will have difficulty getting a decent job and become stuck in the poverty cycle.</p> <p>Breast is best! Scientists and doctors around the world agree that THE best food for a baby is breast milk. It has EVERYTHING nutritious that a baby needs AND it protects your baby from illness. In addition, it is safe, hygienic, available AND FREE. As soon as your baby is born, ask the healthcare worker to show you how to</p>
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<p>10. <i>Why do doctors and health staff say mothers should practice exclusive breastfeeding and what does the term 'exclusive breastfeeding' mean?</i></p> <p>11. <i>It's now obvious to me what an important role nutrition plays in the first 1000 days, but what are the other important things that parents need to do to give their baby the best start in life?</i></p>	<p>breastfeed. Let your baby suck for as long and as often as she wants. If you need help, ask at your community health worker, the clinic or find out about breastfeeding support groups in your area.</p> <p>Exclusive breastfeeding means giving your baby ONLY breastmilk – no water or any other foods until the baby is 6 months of age. It has been found that this is best for babies. If mothers are HIV positive, it is even more important and exclusive breastfeeding has been found to reduce the chances of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Ask your clinic or health care workers advice on when to introduce other food to your baby, what foods to introduce and how.</p> <p>You are so right. Nutrition is hugely important, but so is the love and care mothers, fathers and other caregivers give their precious baby from the time he or she is born. Babies love and need lots of warm, loving physical contact from birth. In those first few hours, days and weeks, they especially love skin to skin contact, and you can cuddle your naked baby on your bare chest or tummy. Spend every opportunity cuddling, loving, rocking, stroking and being with your baby. Respond to his crying. Cuddle her when you feed. Sing, talk and soothe him with your voice. Babies start learning to talk from the day they are born by listening to and eventually</p>
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12. *And as the baby develops, what else can parents do in this important first 1000 days?*

learning how to make the sounds and then understand the meanings of the words you use. Even though they can't talk back, flood your baby with your gentle voice, your words, your songs. Copy the sounds he makes back to him. Tell her what you are doing as you lift, feed, bath and change nappies. That language will become the foundation for their learning, understanding and thinking as they grow and develop. And respond to your baby's cries. Babies cannot be naughty. If they cry they need something.

Just by doing the simple things in the everyday routine of caring for your baby. Talk, sing, tell stories, describe what you are doing; play simple games that you remember from your own childhood or that you see other mums do like 'peek-a-boo' and clapping games. Play is the way babies and toddlers learn about the world. The most important gift you can give your baby or toddler is your time and attention; to listen to them, smile and talk, play and explore with them as they learn about the world they have been born into.

Babies who are spoken to, played with and helped to experience the world in a kind and loving way have the tools to cope well at school and in life. As a parent, you are the most important person in your baby's life and you CAN set him or her up for success!

Conclusion

So it seems that the scientific researchers and the government are all in agreement over the importance of the first 1000 days of life. And we need to remember that this includes the 9 months of pregnancy and how important it is for the mother-to-be to keep healthy, eat nutritious food and take care of herself, so that her baby can develop well and get the best start in life. Once baby is born we need to support his or her continued development through our love and care, keeping him healthy, breastfeeding for 6 months and then introducing nutritious food (under the guidance of the clinic), and talking, singing and playing with your baby from birth. In this way, we'll set our little ones up for success by giving them the best possible start in life.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand the concept of the First 1000 Days from the day of conception to age 2.
- Be aware of the importance of the health, nutrition and well-being of the pregnant mother-to-be on the development of her baby and her baby's brain.
- Gain some practical ideas of nutritious food to eat in pregnancy.
- Know that women who suspect they may be pregnant should visit the clinic before 14 weeks of pregnancy.
- Know that screening during pregnancy and pregnancy check-ups are free.
- Be introduced to the idea of exclusive breastfeeding.
- Know the importance of talking, singing and playing with their babies from birth.