

Los Angeles Family

YOUR ESSENTIAL

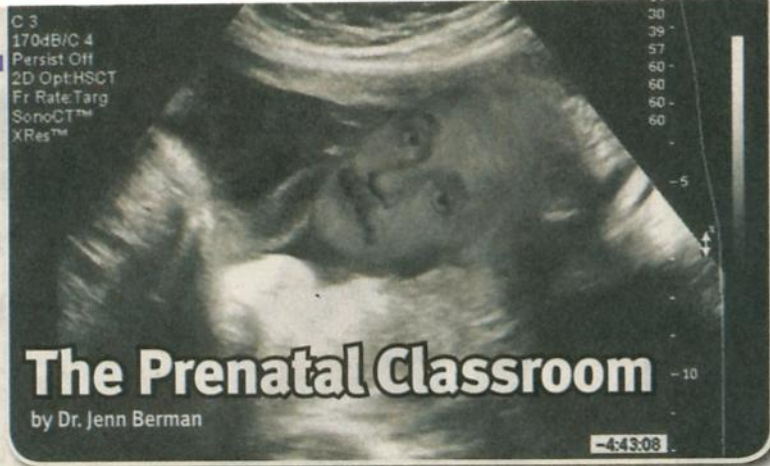
PARENTING RESOURCE

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Baby

Give Your Child a Headstart



The Prenatal Classroom

by Dr. Jenn Berman

There is a new pregnancy trend that has parents singing, beating drums, playing music and talking to their pregnant bellies. A University of Alabama study has linked in utero stimulation programs to increased IQ scores for children by 15 to 30 percent. The Prenatal Enrichment Unit at Huachiew General Hospital claims that prenatally stimulated babies have early speech acquisition, smile sooner, turn their heads toward their parents' voices quicker, respond more to music, and develop better social patterns. Another study done in Venezuela found prenatally stimulated babies were better able to breastfeed, had better hand eye coordination, earlier language development and better problem solving skills. While the approach is still quite controversial, more and more women are participating in the prenatal classroom.

Exercises

DO NOT try any of the exercises described without talking to your obstetrician first, and if you start to feel sick or feel contractions at any point, stop and call your doctor immediately. Experts in the field recommend no more than two ten-minute stimulation sessions a day, one in the morning and one in

the evening. Here are few options:

Baby Touches

Recommended usage: Start any time between week 13 and 27. It should be done from the belly button up. After week 28, it is recommended that the movements be done from head to toe based on the information your obstetrician has given you about your baby's position.

Description: 1) Putting your hand on your belly, stroke your fetus and say, "Stroke, I'm stroking you." 2) Pat your fetus and say, "Pat, I'm patting you." 3) Rub your fetus and say, "Rub, I'm rubbing you."

Exercise: The Kick Game

Recommended usage: Start this game between weeks 20 and 28 in two to three minute sessions.

Description: When you start to feel your baby kick, get in the habit of responding with a gentle pat or press on your abdomen. After several days, start adding the words "kick, kick" as you are patting back. Once the baby starts to kick back where you have been patting or pressing, press back and say, "Hi, this is Mama. Kick. That's good. Kick here again." If your baby starts responding to your pats and presses, try moving your

hand to a new area of your abdomen. This will be easy for the baby to reach and respond to or pat the new spot to see if you can get the baby to follow your movement. If the baby responds by saying, "Good! Kick here."

Exercise: Music

Recommended usage: Start between weeks 20 and 22.

Description: Play classical music or any music that mimics the mother's heartbeat of 60 beats per minute for the study done by audiologist Michel Ockene. It was found that fetal heart rates increased and then declined, which indicated a stress response, when they were played and Mozart. The BeBe Sounds System (<http://bebesounds.com/>) comes with a CD for you, one you can put on your own CD player, your baby, and a microphone for recording your baby's responses. You can also use a CD player you want to talk to your baby.

Every baby responds differently to music, so do your best to be patient and enjoy the bonding time with your baby.

Dr. Jenn Berman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Los Angeles. For more information on her upcoming Prime Time TV appearance on her Monday night radio show (10 to midnight, FM), check out Dr. Jenn's website at www.LosAngelesFamily.com.