

# Develop a child's brain with food

A child's growing body needs many nutrients. Learn some of the foods that can help give your child a brighter future.

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Do you want your child to become a mathematics genius, music protégé or the next Michelangelo? Well, Dr Edward Mugisha of Keserena Children's Hospital, says all you have to do is expose them to the subjects at a young age and feed them right.

He says fatty acids from fish such as salmon or Nile perch are some of the most important nutrients good for key nerve and brain cell development.

Gloria Nabaasa, a nutritional epidemiologist, refers to children's brains as "plastic," because they are vulnerable and impressionable.

"Brain development continues through infancy and childhood (0-5 years). Therefore, nutrition plays a key role in proper development of your child's brain," she adds.

## Pregnancy

She, therefore, advises mothers to eat healthy foods during pregnancy since the developing brain (between 24 and 42 weeks) of the fetus

is vulnerable to nutrition abuse. "An expectant mother should get enough choline (sourced from eggs, dairy, peanuts) Iron, Vitamin B12, Omega 3 fats (fatty fish, chia seeds, and fax seeds). All these nutrients are essential for featal brain development," Nabaasa explains.

Dr Mugisha says a mother should breastfeed exclusively for

the first six months since breast milk contains nutrients including iron, omega3 fatty acids and minerals that support brain development.

## Toddlers

For toddlers and preschool children, Nabaasa recommends foods high in

amino acids such as meat, poultry, milk and legumes. "These foods are needed to make neurotransmitters which allow brain cells to communicate. Daily requirements for infants is (9-11g) while toddlers need (33g), and pre-schooler (19g)," adds Nabaasa.

Children also need about 1000-1600kcal depending on sex, gender, age and activity level the best sources of calories are from carbohydrate foods such as cereals and fruits.

## Vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals iron, zinc, copper, iodine, selenium, vitamin A, choline and folate are important for many cellular functions and cell formation for brain development.

Sources include green leafy vegetables, eggs, organ meats and fruits.

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NUMBER OF MONTHS  
A MOTHER SHOULD  
PRACTICE EXCLUSIVE  
BREASTFEEDING

