Nurturing and Bonding with Your Unborn Child

The time from conception to birth is important in the physical, emotional, and mental development of every baby. It has been thought that until birth there is little that parents can do to affect the baby’s development. Studies now show that the unborn baby is alert, aware, sensitive, and curious. The prenatal time is when all organs are growing quickly, the senses are developing earlier than was ever thought, and the brain needs extra attention.

**Hearing**
Hearing is present at 18 weeks after conception.

**Sight**
Though the baby’s eyes are tightly closed, a baby will turn away from a bright light shown onto the mother’s abdomen.

**Movement**
The unborn child responds to stimulation from outside the womb. The baby can move around by 10 weeks.

**Taste and Smell**
The unborn baby swallows at 13 weeks and the tongue has all its taste buds by 14 weeks. Studies also show a connection in the unborn baby between the sense of smell and the sense of taste.

**Loving Care**
The love, affection, and care that parents give to their unborn babies can affect their well-being.
- A healthy lifestyle before and after conception is important. Certain substances (drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and pollutants) and poor nutrition can put a baby at risk for birth defects.
- Keep your Prenatal appointments. Prenatal health care is so important in keeping yourself and your baby healthy.
- Because the unborn child gets information in many ways, the baby is always learning and adapting to her environment. Bonding and nurturing can begin before birth to help make sure the baby is physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.
- Talk to your baby. At birth, your baby will know your voice at a time when everything else is so new. This will be calming and comforting to your baby.
- Sing and play music. Try calming music played at a low volume.
- Stay positive about the pregnancy. High levels of stress can increase the risk of low birth weight, preterm labor, and miscarriage.
• Learn all you can about what to expect when your baby arrives.
• If you will be going back to work, plan early to find childcare.
• Take care of yourself. Focus on good nutrition, rest, and support from others.

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