

# What Babies Know About Their Bodies and Themselves

July 18, 2018

We are accustomed to thinking about the importance of what even very young babies see and hear, but “touch is the first sensory system to develop in the baby’s brain prenatally,” and is quite well developed by the time the baby is born, said Andrew Meltzoff, the co-director of the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington.

Dr. Meltzoff was the first author on a [study published in late June](#) in the journal Developmental Science, which looked at how 60-day-old infants’ brains responded when different parts of the body were gently tapped.

“We know relatively little about how the infant brain responds to touch,” Peter J. Marshall, chairman of the department of psychology at Temple University, and another author on the study, said in an email. “There is a lot of research on ‘body maps’ that respond to touch in the adult brain, but very little work on how those maps develop.”

The researchers put stretch caps containing EEG electrodes on the babies. These sensors, which are painless for the babies, record brain activity.