

## Motherhood changes your brain to connect better with newborn

Elseline Hoekzema at Leiden University in the Netherlands and her team compared brain scans of 25 first-time mothers with those of first-time fathers, plus childless men and women.

After having a baby, the mums showed shrinking in some areas of the brain, changes not seen in any of the other groups. Most of the affected areas were in regions of the cerebral cortex that are particularly important for understanding others' intentions and emotions.

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"The changes could confer an advantage for the mother by strengthening her ability to read the needs of her relatively helpless infant," says Hoekzema.

It may seem counter-intuitive that brain areas important for empathy shrunk in first-time mothers, but this is probably due to pruning processes that fine-tune and strengthen important neural connections, while getting rid of clutter.

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Hoekzema says the changes may be triggered by the hormonal changes that accompany pregnancy. This could explain why similar changes are not seen in first-time fathers. And when women who had not had a second pregnancy returned for scans two years later, the changes were still there.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Becoming a mother may change the brain to read baby's mind](#)**