

## Face time: Babies' attraction to human faces may develop in the womb

Fetuses favor patterns of light that resemble faces over those without face-like features, a new study suggests. The study...is the first to test visual processing in babies before birth.

The findings suggest that a preference for faces starts even before a baby has ever seen a face. And they run counter to the idea that babies like faces simply because that's what they see first.

Gaining a better understanding of how face processing develops could help scientists better understand atypical development, including in the case of autism, says lead researcher Vincent Reid, professor of psychology at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom.

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From the first hours of life, babies prefer to look at faces over other stimuli. But their vision is blurry at birth, so they don't see the details of a face, just its general outline. Until several years ago, scientists thought the uterus was a dark environment. But the uterus is now thought to transmit light in amounts that a fetus can see.

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The study also offers a way to extend work on infant vision to fetal development. It shows, Reid says, that "the fetus does not passively process the environment but actively responds to the environment."

*[Read the full study [here](#) (behind paywall)]*

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Affinity for faces may emerge in womb](#)**