Today’s piece was prepared by Jeremy Chan, MD, based on an article from the Washington Post [Anesthesia may harm the brains of children under 3, FDA warns](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/12/14/anesthesia-may-harm-the-brains-of-children-under-3-fda-warns/?utm_term=.853750fcb6fa).

This article states that the FDA has now recognized that lengthy procedures requiring anesthesia (more than 3 hours) may cause long-term effects on learning in children under 3. This article provided an unbiased viewpoint and offered different scientific research articles that backed up the FDA’s claim. It mentioned a study performed on rats that looked at nerve cells after being exposed to anesthesia for more than 3 hours. What the journalist does well is to mention that animal studies may not correlate to human models. For example, the article mentions that the few studies that have been performed on children have several limitations and that many could not disentangle whether the effect was due to anesthesia or underlying medical conditions.

The article could have better stressed that most routine procedures such as tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy, ear pressure equalization tubes, and MRIs are less than 3 hours long and thus these procedures should not cause parents to worry, and fails to mention that surgery has important medical indications and that healthcare providers and parents need to assess the risks and benefits of every procedure.

**RESOURCE ON ANESTHESIA AND EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:**

[Smart Tots](http://smarttots.org/) *Collaboration of the FDA and International Anesthesia Research Society for safety of anesthesia in infants and children*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!