

BABY BASICS

TV For Tots—How Little Ones Can Safely Tune In

(NAPSA)—Nearly half of children under 2 years old watch television every day. Some critics think babies and toddlers should not watch any amount of television, but the technology is here to stay. So how can you make sure your young children are tuned in wisely?

It's essential to know that *what* kids watch can be more important than *how much* they watch. And watching with responsible adults can serve as valuable family time and give you an opportunity to parent.

Dr. Edward McCabe, physician-in-chief at Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA, and on the advisory board of cable and satellite network BabyFirstTV, suggests that parents get more involved in the viewing experience as the key to success. "Similar to the books they read together, parents can utilize television as simply another tool to interact and bond with their children."

Here are five simple tips for introducing television to your tot and instilling healthy viewing habits:

- **Make Smart Choices:** Allow children to view programs that are age appropriate and tailored specifically to their needs. One example is BabyFirstTV (www.BabyFirstTV.com), a new cable and satellite network in the U.S. for children under 3 years old. The network features rich, innovative and educational content designed to enhance baby's development in a delightful and engaging way, which focuses on a variety of skills from sign language to math to numbers. There are no commercials, no inappropriate content and no



Used properly, television can be a tool for family togetherness.

oversensory stimulants.

- **Set Limits:** Limit the amount of time a child watches television and balance with other activities such as reading or playing outside.

- **Join Your Child:** Take the opportunity to bond even further and share in the child's TV viewing experience. BabyFirstTV offers on-screen subtitles that help parents interact and engage baby in the programming. Point out the colors of objects on the screen, or sounds that animals make to help baby relate screen objects to the real world.

- **Keep Programming Fresh:** Choose a variety of programs that feature new and evolving content. Introduce a broad range of subjects, so your baby is exposed to new and exciting things.

- **Share Emotions and Vocabulary and Have Fun:** Television viewing is an emotional experience for babies, so acknowledge their emotions and talk about what you see on the screen. Ultimately, spending quality time with your child is the most rewarding part of being a parent, so share in the experience and have fun.