## Safe kids Healthy kids Happy kids Brought to you by

Baby's First Food
A recent study shows that children can learn to eat healthy if parents provide healthy food at an early age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents start giving their baby solid foods at about 6 months of age. These first foods should be healthy and easy for baby to digest.

It may take a little time for your baby to learn to eat solid food. Not all babies are ready for solid foods at the same time. Your baby will still be taking breast milk or formula until he is 1-year old. Be patient with your baby as she starts eating solid foods. You want this time of learning to be fun for

you and your baby.

You will know when your baby is ready for solid foods. Your baby will:

- Want to put things in her mouth.
- Be able to eat small amounts of pureed food from a spoon without pushing the food out of her mouth with her tongue.
- Start to reach for what you are eating.
- Want to eat more often. He might be hungry, even after 8 to 10 feedings of formula or breast milk per day.
- Double his birth weight.

When you think your baby is ready for solid food, talk to your baby's doctor.

- Start slowly. Choose one time during the day when baby is awake and happy. Consider between or after a milk feeding.
- Feed your baby in a high chair that has a safety strap or in an infant seat.
- Expect a mess. Have a wash cloth handy.
- Use a baby spoon. It should be small and smooth.
  - Begin with baby rice cereal. Mix with breast milk, formula, or cool water that has been boiled. Start with 1–2 teaspoons. Gradually increase it to 2-3tablespoons.
  - Introduce one new food every 2–3 days. Waiting
  - 2–3 days will let you see if your baby has any reaction to the food. It could be a rash, diarrhea, fussiness after eating, or an increase in intestinal gas.
- Never add cereal to your baby's bottle. Your baby needs to learn to eat solids with a spoon.

Good foods for baby's first meals: mashed bananas and avocados, pureed cooked apples and pears, pureed cooked potato, carrots, zucchini, and pumpkin.

First foods to avoid: eggs, cow's milk, honey (not safe until after baby's first birthday), and citrus fruits. Homemade beets, collard greens, spinach and turnips contain high levels of nitrates which could cause anemia in babies. It would be best to serve store bought jars of these foods.

If you buy prepared baby foods at the store, make sure they do not contain fillers or sugars. Never feed your baby from the jar. Put a small amount of food in a small dish and promptly refrigerate the unused food in the jar.

## If you make your baby's food at home:

- Wash your hands often.
- Freeze any food that you will not use right away.
- Avoid boiling fruits and vegetables. Instead, bake them or steam them in a steaming basket. This will help to preserve vitamins, minerals, and nutrients.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help. 1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week or log onto www.parenthelpline.org