WELCOME TO *THE HEALTHY BUZZ*

Advocates for Healthy Kids is here to cut through the noise and bring parents the practical, balanced information they need to raise strong, healthy families. From real-life nutrition tips to clear breakdowns of hot-button health topics, this newsletter delivers resources, ideas, and encouragement—so you can stay confident in the most important role you'll ever have: **being your child's greatest advocate.**

THE LATEST

Parents Know Best: Why Freedom to Choose Matters More Than Ever

Every parent knows that raising a child means making constant decisions — from what they eat and watch, to how they learn and grow. Those choices reflect a family's values, circumstances, and beliefs. And increasingly, parents are asking an important question: *Who gets to decide what's best for our children — us, or someone else?*

At Advocates for Healthy Kids, we believe that parents should always be empowered and have the freedom to make decisions that shape their children's lives. Whether it's a medical choice, a classroom lesson, or the time they spend online, families deserve respect — **not restrictions.**

The Bigger Picture: Parental Autonomy Under Pressure

Across the country, families are facing new forms of overreach. Schools make decisions about sensitive topics without parental input. Families are given "one-size-fits-all" medical guidance. Tech platforms quietly shape what children see online.

Each of these issues looks different on the surface, but they share one root problem: parents aren't always centered in the decisions that belong to them.

Restoring parental autonomy doesn't mean rejecting expertise or institutions. It means restoring balance — *where experts inform, not impose*. Parents should have access to honest information, clear options, and the ability to say yes or no based on what's right for their families.

A Shift Toward Educated Decision-Making

Even at the federal level, we're seeing small but meaningful steps in that direction. The CDC recently updated its vaccine guidance to emphasize individual-based decision-making — encouraging families to talk with their doctors rather than following blanket recommendations.

That move reflects a broader truth: Americans don't want to lose access to vaccines or medical care — they just want the right to make their own decisions.

When parents have the freedom to weigh risks, ask questions, and make informed choices, trust grows. When they're pressured or dismissed, that trust breaks down.

Freedom Across All Fronts

The same principle applies beyond medicine.

- **In schools:** Parents deserve transparency about what their children are learning and the right to opt out of lessons that conflict with their values.
- **Online:** Families should have tools to protect children from harmful or age-inappropriate content without ceding control to tech companies.
- **In communities:** Local decision-making should be encouraged, not replaced by distant bureaucracies that don't understand families' daily realities.

These issues aren't partisan. They're about who ultimately raises our kids — parents or institutions.

The Path Forward

Empowering parents strengthens families, schools, and communities. It builds trust in public systems instead of resentment. And it reminds us that **good policy starts with partnership, *not pressure.***

Every family's story is different, but the principle is the same: parents know their children best. Preserving their right to choose isn't just a cultural value — it's a cornerstone of a healthy society.

What the CDC Vaccine Schedule Really Means — and What You Can Ask About It

You've probably seen it posted in your pediatrician's office: a colorful chart from the CDC showing which vaccines are recommended at which ages. It's called the CDC Immunization Schedule, and it's used by doctors across the country to guide care.

But here's something many parents don't realize: it's a recommendation — not a hard rule.

What Does "Recommended" Mean?

While the CDC schedule is widely followed, it isn't legally binding. States decide which vaccines are required for school or daycare entry, and those rules vary. (You can look up your state's requirements here.)

If your family has specific medical needs, concerns, or preferences, your doctor may suggest an alternative schedule or adjustments. That's not unusual — and it's worth discussing if you feel like the pace is too fast or your child has had past reactions.

What Should You Ask Your Provider?

Use the schedule as a starting point for a conversation — not the end of one. Some questions to bring to your pediatrician:

- Is this timeline flexible for my child's needs?
- What happens if we space things out?

- Are there risks to delaying certain vaccines?
- Which ones are most important right now?

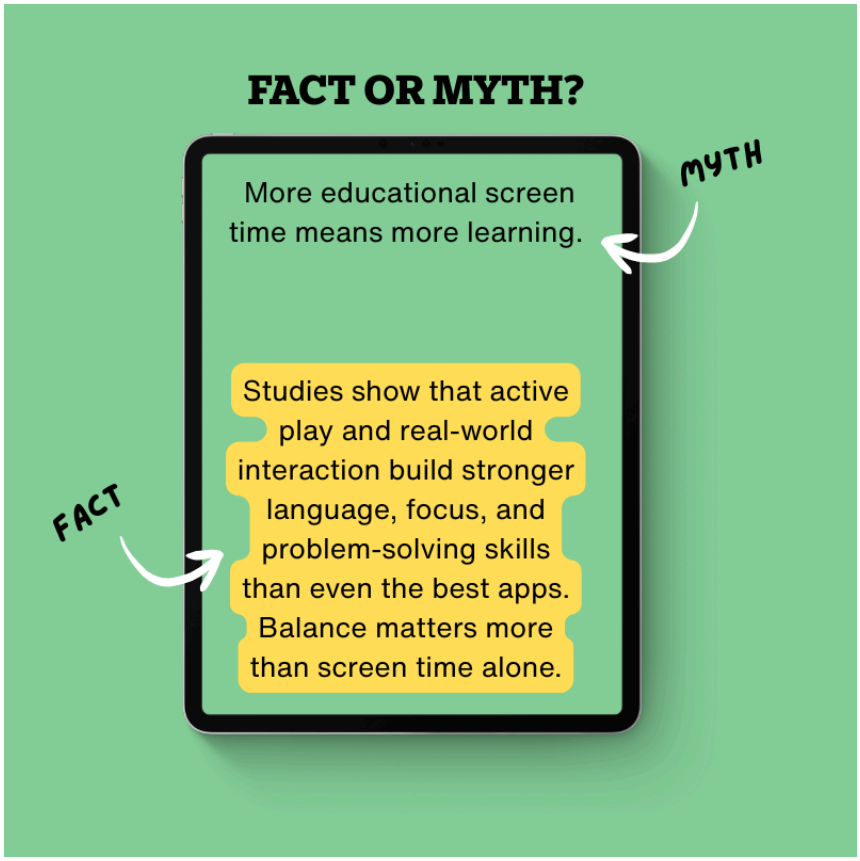
The goal isn't always to blanket accept or reject the schedule — *it's to understand it.* When parents are empowered with knowledge, they're better equipped to make the choices that fit their family's values and health needs.

Screens vs. Sleep

Too much screen time affects more than attention spans — it impacts sleep, mood, and even social development. Our latest post on Instagram breaks down how blue light disrupts melatonin (the sleep hormone) and why setting healthy limits helps kids rest, focus, and grow. Learn how a balanced approach to screens can make a big difference in your child's well-being.

READ MORE

FACT OR MYTH?



Keep up the conversation!

Follow us **@adv4healthykids** for useful tips, clear breakdowns on hot-button issues, and encouragement to stay empowered and confident in your role as a key part of your child's growth.

Let your child make one family decision this week (dinner menu, weekend outing, or bedtime story pick) and talk through why they chose it. It teaches kids how to weigh options, explain reasoning, and see the value of thoughtful decision-making (a lifelong skill in confidence and autonomy).

A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT

Dear Friends,

Every family has its own rhythm — the routines, values, and small decisions that make it unique. In a world full of headlines, recommendations, and advice, it can be easy to forget that you know your children best.

Whether it's choosing what they learn, what they eat, or how much time they spend online, parents deserve the space to decide what fits their families — not someone else's idea of what "should" work. Research consistently shows that children thrive when parents feel confident and supported in those decisions. That confidence builds trust, stability, and a sense of belonging that no outside expert can replace.

This week, I encourage you to slow down and take pride in the choices you make every day — the small ones that don't make headlines but make a big difference. Because when parents lead with intention, kids learn how to do the same.

Thank you for being part of this community that believes in empowering families to make decisions rooted in love, not pressure.

Warmly,
Siobhan Dunnavant, MD
Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

PRODUCE OF THE MONTH

EASY SCHOOL NIGHT DINNER RECIPE

SUSHI-STYLE SANDWICH ROLLS

Empower your kids to make their own dinner decisions — literally. These Sushi-Style Sandwich Rolls turn a simple meal into a creative, hands-on activity that teaches independence and balance. When kids choose their own fillings, they're learning to make thoughtful choices that reflect their taste, confidence, and growing sense of responsibility.

DOWNLOAD TO SAVE THIS RECIPE FOR LATER

ENGAGE WITH US

How do you teach your kids to make confident choices — even when everyone around them is doing something different?

LET US KNOW HERE

KEEP IN TOUCH

Follow Advocates for Healthy Kids for quick tips, fun updates, and real talk from fellow parents and our founder, Dr. Dunnavant. Get involved and help us keep our children safe and healthy!

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