



## 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.**

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## A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT



*Dear Friends,*

*One of the things I tell parents in my practice (and have believed for a long time) is that the most underutilized resource in a child's health isn't a medication or a specialist or a new piece of research. **It's you.***

*Not you as a medical expert. You as the person who knows your child better than anyone in that exam room ever will. The one who notices when something is subtly off before it becomes obviously wrong. The one whose gut feeling, more often than not, turns out to be right.*

*That instinct deserves more credit than we give it. In a world full of noise, competing headlines, conflicting advice, appointments that move too fast, it's easy to second-guess yourself. To assume that if something were really wrong, someone with a credential would have caught it first.*

*But that's not how it works. Parents catch things first. They always have.*

*So if there's one thing I want you to carry with you this week, it's this: stay curious, stay vocal, and trust that showing up fully engaged in your child's health by asking the questions, noticing the patterns, pushing for the answers, is not a burden on the system. It's exactly how the system is supposed to work.*

*You're more equipped than you think. I'm glad you're here.*

Warmly,

**Dr. Siobhan Dunnavant, MD**

Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

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## FACT OR MYTH?



**FACT OR MYTH?**

If something were really wrong with your child, a doctor would catch it first.

[SEE THE FULL STUDY HERE](#)

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## 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.

# ADVOCACY ACTION



## The Question Card



### The Question Card

Before your child's next doctor's appointment, sit down together and make a question card. Let them write or draw the things they want to ask the doctor — even if the questions feel small or silly. Then bring it into the room and let them ask.

It teaches kids early that their voice belongs in their own healthcare. And it's a small thing that tends to open up a bigger conversation — about how their body works, what they're curious about, and what going to the doctor actually means. You might learn something about what's been on their mind that you didn't know to ask about.

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## THE LATEST

### Your Kid's Body Is Trying to Tell You Something. Are You Listening?

Most parents know the feeling. Something is off — but you can't quite put your finger on it. They're cranky, they're bored, they've been horizontal on the couch for two hours, and now they're picking a fight with their sibling over absolutely nothing.

**Before you troubleshoot the behavior, check the basics: *when was the last time they moved their body?***

### **Movement Is More Than Exercise**

Physical activity isn't just about fitness. For kids, movement is one of the primary ways their bodies regulate mood, manage stress, consolidate sleep, and maintain focus. When they don't get enough of it, the effects show up in ways most parents don't immediately connect to inactivity.

A 2025 systematic review in [BMC Public Health](#) found that regular physical activity meaningfully reduces anxiety, improves mood, and supports emotional regulation in typically developing children and adolescents. That's not a side benefit. **It's a direct, measurable outcome of consistent movement.**

And the threshold is lower than most parents think. Research published in [Scientific Reports](#) found that just 3.5 minutes of light-intensity exercise improved both focus and psychological mood in children. A short walk. A dance break. A lap around the yard.

### **What It Actually Looks Like**

The challenge is that kids rarely announce they need to move. They show it through behavior and physical complaints that can look like a lot of other things.

- 1. Can't focus or stay on task.** Inactivity is directly linked to reduced attention and cognitive performance. Movement primes the brain for learning in ways that sitting simply doesn't.
- 2. Extra cranky or emotionally overwhelmed.** Exercise regulates cortisol — the body's primary stress hormone. Without enough physical outlet, that hormone builds, and kids have fewer natural tools to manage big feelings.
- 3. Not sleeping well.** A 2025 meta-analysis in [European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#) confirmed that physical activity significantly improves sleep quality and duration in children. Less movement during the day often means a harder night.
- 4. Picking fights with siblings.** Pent-up energy without an outlet tends to come out sideways. Conflict spikes when kids are understimulated physically — it's not a character issue, it's an energy issue.
- 5. Appetite is off.** Movement and hunger regulation are closely connected. A 2024 review in the [International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) found physical activity plays a meaningful role in how children regulate caloric intake. A child who hasn't moved much may not feel hungry — or may feel hungry in ways that seem out of sync.

**6. Complaining of headaches.** A 2024 study published in [Neurology](#) found that lifestyle factors (including low physical activity) are directly associated with frequent recurring headaches in children and adolescents. More sitting, more headaches.

**7. Bouncing off the walls — or glued to the couch.** Both extremes can signal the same underlying need. Hyperactivity and complete disengagement are two sides of the same coin: a nervous system looking for physical input it hasn't gotten.

### Outside First

A 2025 study in [Frontiers in Sports and Active Living](#) found outdoor physical activity in particular was linked to better sleep and overall quality of life in children ages 8–12. There's something about open space, sensory variety, and unstructured time outside that indoor activity doesn't fully replicate.

That doesn't mean you need to schedule something. A walk around the block counts. So does throwing a ball in the yard, chasing the dog, or a five-minute dance break in the kitchen.

[Research confirms](#) that even brief movement can counteract the negative physical and behavioral effects of sedentary time in kids.

### A Simple Reframe

Movement isn't a reward for good behavior. It's not something kids earn after homework is finished. It's a basic input (like sleep and food) that their bodies need to function well.

The next time behavior starts to unravel, ask the question before reaching for any other solution: ***When did they last move?***

More often than not, the answer tells you everything.

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### The Appointment Is Yours. Use It.

There's a version of the pediatrician's office visit that a lot of parents know well.

You've got ten minutes. The doctor runs through the checklist, offers a couple of recommendations, and before you've had a chance to collect your thoughts, you're back in the parking lot wondering why you didn't ask the thing you've been thinking about for three weeks.

That feeling isn't a reflection of your doctor. It's a reflection of the environment. Clinical settings are high-pressure by nature, and a [national survey of 2,000 Americans found that nearly half report feeling anxious before a doctor's appointment](#) — and nearly

half also say they're afraid to ask their healthcare provider questions at all. That anxiety is real, and it gets in the way of the conversation you actually need to have.

The good news: it's entirely fixable. And most providers want to help you fix it.

### **Families and Providers Want the Same Thing**

[A statewide research study on parent-provider communication](#) found that when both sides were asked what they wanted from the relationship, the answer was consistent: trusting partnerships that put children first. Parents aren't disengaged — 76% reported being very or extremely engaged in their child's care, and 79% felt confident discussing even difficult topics with their provider.

The gap isn't motivation. It's time and preparation. And that's something parents can actually control.

### **Write It Down Before You Go**

The single most underused tool in any medical visit is a written list of questions brought into the room.

[Research published in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine](#) found that 40–80% of medical information provided during appointments is forgotten almost immediately — and that anxiety in clinical settings directly compounds the problem. When patients are stressed, attentional focus narrows and peripheral information simply doesn't get processed or retained.

Writing questions down before you walk in changes that dynamic. Three questions, written down, asked and answered before you leave — that's a more productive visit than ten questions you forgot to bring up.

You're always allowed to say, "I have a few things I wanted to go over before we wrap up." A good provider will make time.

### **Ask About the "Why"**

One of the most valuable habits a parent can build is asking for the reasoning behind a recommendation — not to push back, but to genuinely understand it. There's a meaningful difference between following guidance you understand and nodding along to something that left you uncertain.

Good questions to keep in your back pocket:

- Why is this recommended at this age specifically?
- What are the benefits, and what should I watch for afterward?
- Is there anything I can do at home to support this?
- What would you want to know if you were in my position?

These aren't confrontational. They're exactly the questions a good provider should be walking you through anyway. Asking them out loud makes sure that happens — even on a packed schedule.

There can be an unspoken pressure in medical settings to decide on the spot. For non-urgent decisions, you don't have to.

You're always allowed to say: "I'd like to think this over and follow up." Or: "Can you point me to something I can read at home?" Taking time to make a considered decision about your child's care isn't hesitation — it's good parenting.

### **Keep Your Own Records**

Maintain a running health file for each child — visit summaries, diagnoses, referrals, medication history, and your own notes. It doesn't need to be elaborate.

Over time, it becomes one of the most useful tools you have. You're not relying on memory when a new provider asks for history. You can spot patterns across visits. You have a clear reference point when something feels off and you're trying to explain why.

### **What Good Partnership Actually Looks Like**

The same research on parent-provider communication found something that's easy to overlook: when families and providers connect through consistent, open communication, children's outcomes measurably improve. It's not just a nice idea — it's documented.

Parents and providers work best as genuine partners. You know your child. Your provider knows medicine. **When those two things work together openly and honestly, that's when kids get the best care possible.**

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## Looking for a place to start your research?

Check out our [Resources Page!](#) It's a great place to begin your journey in becoming a confident, educated advocate in your child's development.

**START YOUR RESEARCH**

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## SMOOTHIE PACKS

## A freezer shortcut that puts kids in charge of their own healthy snack.

These are less of a recipe and more of a system. Once you set it up, it runs itself. On prep day, everyone fills their own bag with their favorite combination of fruit, greens, and mix-ins and tosses it in the freezer. On a rushed morning or hectic afternoon between activities, grab a bag, dump it in the blender, add liquid, and a nutrient-packed smoothie is ready in under two minutes. Every pack is personalized, which means no negotiating over what goes in!



[DOWNLOAD TO SAVE THIS RECIPE FOR LATER](#)

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## ENGAGE WITH US

**How confident do you feel speaking up at your child's doctor's appointments?**

- *Very confident — I always ask what I need to ask*
- *Somewhat confident — I get through most of it*
- *Not very confident — I often leave wishing I'd said more*
- *It depends on the doctor*

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## 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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