



## 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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## THE LATEST

### ***Vaccine Policies Are Changing — Here's How Parents Can Stay Grounded***

If it feels like vaccine recommendations are in the news every other week, you're not wrong. Advisory panels get reshuffled, old guidance is questioned, and new studies come out that seem to contradict what you just heard. For parents trying to make the best decisions for their kids, it can feel overwhelming (sometimes even impossible) to know who to trust.

#### **Why the Back-and-Forth?**

Science isn't static. Recommendations change as new data comes in, as different experts weigh risks and benefits, and—yes—as politics shifts. That doesn't mean the system is broken, but it does mean parents should expect changes over time.

Some of these changes are headline-making, but many fly under the radar. A shot that was once recommended at birth might now be suggested later. A combination vaccine might be reconsidered for younger kids. One year a booster is pushed, the next year it's quietly downplayed.

To parents, it can look like mixed messages. And in some cases, that's exactly what it is.

### **The Problem With Relying on “One Expert”**

Part of the frustration is that many families feel they're told to “just trust the experts.” But which experts? The busy doctor rushing through a well visit? The CDC? The advisory panel that was replaced? Or the medical school professor writing an op-ed?

When the guidance changes, parents are left wondering if yesterday's “must-have” vaccine is today's “maybe.” That's where skepticism comes in—not necessarily about vaccines themselves, but about the idea that one authority has all the answers.

### **What Parents Can Do Instead**

Even though school is back in session, there's still plenty of daylight left after school lets out. Encourage your kids to spend time outside! Whether it's a school sports team, a walk with the dog, or a bike ride with friends, outdoor activity helps your child release pent-up energy and soak up some vitamin D. Physical activity is great for mental and physical health, so let them move, explore, and unwind in the fresh air.

- **Asking questions without apology.** A good pediatrician will welcome them. What does this shot do? Why at this age? Are there alternatives? What are the risks if we delay or decline?
- **Reading across sources.** Don't just stop at a headline. Compare what medical associations, independent researchers, and state health departments are saying. If you want to see ingredients, dosing schedules, or side effect data, those resources exist and you're allowed to request them.
- **Breaking it down decision by decision.** You don't need to accept (or reject) the entire schedule at once. Look at each vaccine, each ingredient, each recommendation, and weigh it in context.

### **Why This Matters**

Parents are right to notice the distractions: the politics, the headlines, the experts contradicting each other. That noise can make it tempting to throw your hands up altogether. But when you dig beneath it, you'll find reliable information that empowers you to make choices with

confidence.

Parents who feel empowered in the decision-making process around their child's health (not pressured) are more likely to feel confident in the care that protects their children.

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### ***Why Family Time Matters More Than Ever in Raising Resilient Kids***

Family dinners, weekend routines, even five quiet minutes before bed—these moments might feel small, but research shows they have a powerful impact on a child's development. In a culture that often pulls kids toward screens and packed schedules, intentionally carving out family time is one of the most effective ways to strengthen values, resilience, and wellbeing.

### **The Science Behind Family Time**

- **Better mental health:** Children who regularly share family meals are less likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety, and more likely to have higher self-esteem. A study found family meals were linked to lower rates of substance use and eating disorders in teens.
- **Improved academics:** Studies show that children who eat dinner with their families four or more times a week perform better in school, with stronger vocabularies and higher grades.
- **Stronger values & life skills:** Kids who spend consistent time with parents are more likely to adopt family values, build empathy, and practice conflict resolution—skills that matter far beyond childhood.

### **Why It's Getting Harder**

We all feel the squeeze:

- Busy schedules with work, sports, and activities.
- Phones and tablets at the dinner table, or endless scrolling that chips away at time together.
- Cultural pressure that tells parents kids “need” to be busy 24/7 to succeed.

The reality is kids don't need nonstop activities—they need relationships that ground them. And parents set the tone for that by deciding what gets priority in the home.

## Simple Ways to Reclaim Family Time

- **Protect one anchor point:** Whether it's dinner, Saturday breakfast, or nightly story time, make it a non-negotiable. Even 20 minutes counts.
- **Create screen-free rituals:** Phones put away during meals, car rides, or family prayer/reading time. Kids notice when parents model presence.
- **Use “transition moments” wisely:** Talk in the car after practice, fold laundry together, let kids help cook. These small conversations often open the door to deeper ones.
- **Keep it simple:** You don't need elaborate outings. A walk around the block or board game before bed can matter as much as a big vacation.

## Why It Matters for Parents

When families carve out intentional time, children not only feel loved—they also internalize values that guide them long after childhood. Affectionate, present parenting has been linked to better long-term educational, emotional, and even economic outcomes.

Family time doesn't have to be perfect or Instagram-worthy. What matters is presence, consistency, and making sure your children know that in a noisy world, home is the place where they are heard, loved, and guided.

**In other words: the hours spent around the dinner table, in the backyard, or laughing together on a road trip aren't just nice memories. *They're shaping who your child becomes.***

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## Questions Worth Asking Your Pediatrician

Asking questions at the doctor's office isn't pushback — it's confidence. A few thoughtful questions can give you the clarity to make decisions that fit your child and your family:

- What are the benefits at my child's age?
- What side effects should I watch for?
- Could my child's health history change this recommendation?
- Is the timing flexible, and what are the trade-offs if we delay?
- Are there alternatives, like separate doses?

- What are the risks if we decline or postpone?

[READ MORE HERE](#)

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## FACT OR MYTH?

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Screen time is fine as long as parents keep an eye on what kids are watching.

**MYTH:** Content matters, but so does the amount of time spent. Even “good” screen use can interfere with sleep, mood, and healthy play if it lasts too long. Setting limits helps kids strike a better balance, leaving space for rest, movement, and real-life connection.

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*Keep up the conversation!*

Follow us [@adv4healthykids](https://twitter.com/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



### MOVEMENT SCAVENGER HUNT!



Looking for a quick way to get kids moving? **Try a Movement Scavenger Hunt!** Write a short list: jump three times, run to the mailbox, balance on one foot, hop like a frog—and let your kids check off each task. It's a fun, low-pressure way to squeeze in exercise, burn off energy, and share some laughs together after dinner.

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### A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT



Dear Friends,

*The tragic assassination of Charlie Kirk has left many of us shocked and grieving. Events like this remind us how fragile life can feel, and how much we need connection when the world seems uncertain.*

*In moments like these, our families become our greatest source of strength. Pulling your children close, setting aside the phone for a little while, sharing a meal or a walk—these simple acts help kids process emotions and remind them they're safe and loved. Research shows that strong family bonds not only build resilience in children, but also shape the kind of communities they grow into as adults.*

*We can't shield our kids from every hard headline, but we can give them the tools to face challenges with confidence: routines that bring security, conversations that build trust, and time together that fosters belonging. These daily investments matter more than ever in raising children who are grounded, resilient, and prepared to thrive in an uncertain world.*

*Thank you for continuing on this journey with us. By strengthening our families, we plant the seeds for stronger communities and a healthier future for all of our children.*

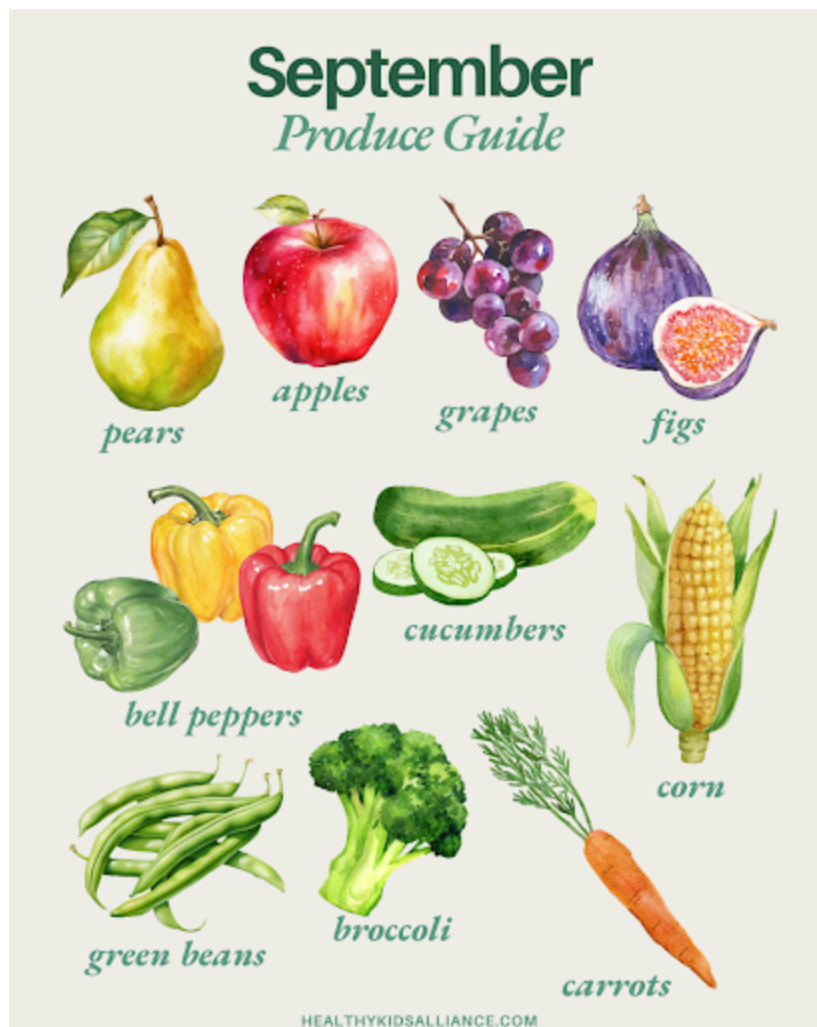
Warmly,

**Siobhan Dunnivant, MD**

Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

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**PRODUCE OF THE MONTH**



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## EASY SCHOOL NIGHT DINNER RECIPE

### MINI MEATLOAF MUFFINS WITH HIDDEN VEGGIES

Classic comfort food, but faster and more nutritious. These Mini Meatloaf Muffins bake in half the time of a traditional loaf, sneak in extra veggies, and give kids the fun of having their very own “mini” portion. Pair with a side salad or roasted veggies for a complete weeknight meal.

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

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## ENGAGE WITH US

*When making health decisions for your kids, who do you rely on most for advice—your pediatrician, family, trusted voices online, or your own research?*



LET US KNOW HERE

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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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