



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.**

A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT



Dear Friends,

One of the realities of parenting today is that medical guidance and recommendations don't stay static. Schedules change, language shifts, and headlines can make it feel like the ground is always moving beneath our feet — especially when it comes to our kids' health.

*Here's what I want you to hear: **change in medicine is a signal to pause, not to panic.** It's an opportunity to slow down, ask questions, and look more closely at what's being recommended and why.*

When guidance shifts, I encourage families to treat it as a checkpoint. Verify the reasoning behind the change. Weigh the potential benefits and risks for your child — their age, health, environment, and circumstances. Then set a plan you're comfortable with, knowing it can evolve over time.

That same skill matters beyond medicine. Our children are surrounded by loud opinions, strong claims, and fast-moving information. When they see us approach new guidance thoughtfully (not reacting out of fear or pressure) they learn how to think critically and confidently for themselves.

You don't need to have everything decided immediately. You don't need to follow headlines or online voices blindly. What matters most is staying engaged, asking informed questions, and trusting yourself to make decisions rooted in careful consideration.

Remember: you are your child's first and most important advocate. Taking the time to understand your options is not hesitation — it's responsible parenting.

Warmly,

Siobhan Dunnavant, MD

Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

FACT OR MYTH?

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When medical recommendations change, it means parents were given the wrong advice — or that one approach should apply to every child.

MYTH: Medical guidance evolves as new data becomes available, and most recommendations are designed as starting points. Individual factors like age, health history, and risk matter — which is why educated, family-specific decision-making is essential.

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



Headline → Homework Night

Make Learning the World Fun



What did it claim?



Any questions?



Let's fact check



What do you want to learn?

Headline to Homework Night

Once this week, choose an article or viral video together — from a news site, Instagram, or TikTok. At dinner, have your child share:

- What the article or video claimed
- One question it left them with
- Where they went to learn more
- What stayed the same and what changed after they checked other sources

Why it works: Kids learn that first impressions aren't final and that confidence comes from verifying, not reacting.

THE LATEST

Vaccine Schedule Changes: What Shifted, What Didn't, and How to Navigate With Confidence

On January 5, 2026, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced a revised childhood immunization schedule. The number of vaccines recommended for all children dropped from 17 to 11, with several others moving to [“shared clinical decision-making”](#) between parents and doctors.

For many parents, that’s both a relief (more room for individual choice) and a reason to slow down and double-check the details. With this (and any changes in medicine) now is a great opportunity to get the facts, ask smart questions, and set a plan that fits your family.

What Changed?

- **Still recommended for all kids:** protection against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough ([DTaP](#)), [Hib](#), [pneumococcal disease](#), [polio](#), measles, mumps, rubella ([MMR](#)), [chickenpox](#), and HPV (now one dose rather than two).
- **Moved to shared decision-making or higher-risk groups:** [rotavirus](#), [influenza](#), [meningococcal disease](#), [hepatitis A](#), [hepatitis B](#), and COVID-19. These are no longer blanket recommendations for all children, but they remain available and covered.
- **Insurance coverage:** HHS says all vaccines recommended by the CDC as of Dec. 31, 2025 remain covered under ACA plans, Medicaid/CHIP, and Vaccines for Children — families should not face out-of-pocket costs.

Why the Change?

[HHS](#) and the [CDC](#) framed the update as aligning the U.S. with “peer, developed nations” while emphasizing informed, individualized decisions.

Not everyone agrees with the shift. Some medical organizations have warned that scaling back routine recommendations could lower uptake and increase certain illnesses.

What Happens Now in the States?

Even with a federal schedule change, [school-entry requirements](#) are set by states — not the CDC. That means your state’s list for daycare/school may be different (and may not change at all).

Because states set school-entry rules, expect variation and headlines. Some states may align with the federal change; others may keep prior requirements or adopt their own guidance. Keep an eye on your state health department and local school district updates for up to date

information on how your state is handling the change.

What Does This Mean for My Family?

Use the change as a checkpoint: verify, weigh, plan. This is your chance to step back, ask for clarity, and move forward with confidence.

1. Verify the “why” for each vaccine at your child’s age

- a.* How common/severe is it for kids like mine this season or in our region?
- b.* What’s the expected benefit for my child at this age vs. later?
- c.* Where to read official basics before a visit: CDC Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) are required by law before vaccination and explain each shot’s benefits/risks in plain language. [JustTheInserts.com](https://www.justtheinserts.com)

2. Weigh risks in both directions (disease vs. side effects)

- a.* A balanced conversation compares the risk of the illness if you skip or delay versus the risk of vaccine side effects if you take it now.
- b.* For example, medical groups highlight ongoing pediatric flu severity in some seasons; others emphasize tailoring decisions for individual kids.

3. Set your plan with your pediatrician

- a.* You don’t need an all-or-nothing answer. With several vaccines now in “shared decision-making,” it’s reasonable to:
 - i.* Prioritize what matters most right now (e.g., MMR/DTaP remain standard for all children per CDC/HHS).
 - ii.* Decide which “shared” vaccines fit your child’s risk profile (travel, daycare, chronic conditions, local outbreaks).
 - iii.* Revisit at the next well visit — plans can evolve as your child grows or as seasons/outbreaks change.

Questions to Bring to Your Next Well Visit

- Which vaccines are still “recommended for all children” at my child’s age? Which are “shared decision-making,” and why?

- What is my child's risk for each disease this year in our area? How does that compare to the risks of the vaccines?
- If we defer one of the "shared" vaccines now, what signs/situations would make you advise getting it later?
- What side effects are common vs. rare? What should I watch for & when should I call?
- Can I see the VIS and manufacturer information for each vaccine we're considering?
- How does this plan line up with our state's daycare/school requirements?

You Have Options

With several vaccines now in "shared decision-making," there's room for thoughtful conversations with your child's pediatrician. Remember, [Vaccine Information Statements](#) are your legal right before any shot, written to explain benefits and risks in plain language.

Bring the question list to your child's next visit, check your state's school/daycare requirements so your plan fits your life, and use our [Resources Page](#) as a starting point for your research.

When guidance shifts, treat it as a checkpoint, not a crisis — verify the why, weigh your options, set your plan, and move forward with confidence.

Further Reading

- [CDC Announcement](#)
- [HHS Announcement](#)
- [HHS Fact Sheet](#)
- [State Vaccination Requirements](#)

Great Families Argue Well: Why debate at home raises stronger, steadier kids

If your dinner table feels like a townhall sometimes, you're not alone. Kids come home with big opinions from school, friends, TikTok, and some of it can sound way out there. That's not a crisis; it's an opening. A home where questions are welcomed and ideas get stress-tested is a home where kids learn how to think, not just what to think. Done well, debate at home builds resilience, character, and conviction, without shaming, silencing, or surrendering your family's values.

Why the home is the safest place to test ideas

- The goal isn't to win the argument; it's to build the muscle. Back-and-forth exchanges with caring adults are foundational for healthy development — the [“serve and return”](#) that helps kids connect dots, regulate emotions, and communicate clearly. That skill starts in early childhood and keeps paying off as kids grow.
- Resilience is learned, not lectured. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) highlights confidence, connection, coping, and control as pillars of resilience — exactly what we practice when we let kids make a case, hear a counterpoint, and adjust.

Debate strengthens values — yours and theirs

- Kids adopt family values more deeply when those values are explained, modeled, and discussed, not just posted as rules on the fridge. [Authoritative parenting](#) (warmth plus clear boundaries) is linked to better behavior, stronger academics, and healthier adulthood outcomes. Conversation is the engine.
- When kids can “try on” an idea at home (question a headline, defend a position, refine it after pushback) they either let go of flimsy views or they learn to ground their convictions in fact.

Make the table do the heavy lifting

- Routine family meals are [linked](#) with better mental health and fewer risk-taking behaviors. They also buffer the sting of online drama: teens who eat dinner with family more often show fewer negative effects from cyberbullying, likely because they have a built-in forum to talk things through.

A practical way to host healthy debate at home

- **Set the tone first.** “In this house, we hear each other out.” Keep warmth and boundaries together: respect for the person, high standards for the argument. That’s authoritative parenting in action.
- **Ask, don’t pounce.** Try, “Walk me through your view,” then, “What evidence would change your mind?” Curiosity lowers defenses and invites kids to examine their own reasoning.
- **Separate person from idea.** Affirm their courage to speak; scrutinize the claim. Kids learn that disagreement isn’t disrespect and that truth isn’t fragile.
- **Bring receipts, not rage.** Model how to check sources, compare perspectives, and spot shaky stats. You’re teaching a life skill: sense-making in a noisy world.

- **Close the loop.** When the conversation wraps up, summarize points of agreement, note where you disagree, and restate the family's values. Kids should leave the table feeling heard and clear on where your family stands.

When a child brings home something "out there"

- **Breathe, then buy time.** "Thanks for sharing. Let's look at that together after dinner." Delay beats a blow-up.
- **Right-size the claim.** Is it a moral issue, a factual question, a policy debate, or just playground bravado? Address the right layer with the right tone. contraindications.
- **Practice "steel-manning."** Ask your child to make the best version of both sides. It builds fairness and sharpens critical thinking.
- **Re-anchor to family standards.** "In our family, we tell the truth, we protect the vulnerable, and we take responsibility." Then explain how those standards apply here.

Why this approach works for families

- **It protects the parent's role.** You're the first teacher (and the filter) helping kids weigh claims against faith, duty, and responsibility.
- **It builds grit without cynicism.** Your child learns to face tough ideas with calm confidence, not collapse or blind conformity.
- **It travels well.** The same skills that keep family dinner civil help kids navigate classrooms, teams, social media, and eventually the workplace.

Quick starter prompts for tonight

- "What did you hear today that sounded true? What sounded off — and why?"
- "If you had to argue the other side for five minutes, what would you say?"
- "What value of ours applies here—honesty, courage, responsibility, stewardship? How?"

The Takeaway

Your home is the safest place for kids to pressure-test ideas and for you to pass down the values that will guide them when you're not in the room. Regular, two-way conversations build the very traits we want in the next generation: resilience, clear thinking, strong character, and the courage to stand (politely but firmly) for what's right. Keep the table open, keep the tone warm, and keep your standards high. That's how families raise kids who can navigate tough debates without losing their way.

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

EASY SCHOOL NIGHT DINNER RECIPE

SHEET PAN LEMON CHICKEN & VEGGIE BOWLS

Short winter days and school-night chaos can make healthy dinners feel impossible. This simple sheet-pan meal comes together in about 45 minutes (*made shorter if you pre-cut veggies*), uses seasonal produce, and lets kids help prep and assemble their own bowls — so the whole family can enjoy a nutritious, hands-on dinner together.



DOWNLOAD TO SAVE THIS RECIPE FOR LATER

ENGAGE WITH US

When recommendations or guidance change:

- *What's the first thing you do to decide what's right for your family?*
- *Where do you usually go to verify information?*
- *What would make those decisions feel easier or clearer?*

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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