



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

Smartphones in Schools: Why More States Are Saying “Enough”

Smartphones have become part of nearly every child's daily life, but the question of whether they belong in the classroom is heating up. More states, including Virginia, New York, Florida, and South Carolina, are rolling out restrictions or outright bans on phone use during the school day. **The reason is simple: distraction, declining mental health, and lost learning.**

The Case Against Phones in Schools

A growing body of research shows what parents and teachers have seen firsthand: phones get in the way of learning. [Two-thirds of students admit](#) they're distracted by their phones in class, and more than half say they're distracted by the devices of their peers. That's a double hit to focus.

Dr. Marty Makary, a Johns Hopkins physician and FDA Commissioner, argues the problem is urgent. [Writing in the New York Post](#), Makary compared phones to “second-hand smoke” in classrooms—one child's scrolling distracts another—and warned that smartphones are fueling

anxiety, depression, and loneliness among teens. He points to CDC data showing depression rates for girls have more than doubled in the past decade, and says banning phones in schools is as common-sense as banning alcohol. [Makary, 2024]

The numbers back him up:

- [The average teen](#) receives 273 notifications a day.
- [44% of teens](#) say their phone makes them anxious.
- [Excessive use](#) is linked to higher stress hormones, worse sleep, and increased blood pressure

What Parents Should Know About the New Bans

Policies vary. In some states, phones must be stored in lockers from the start to the end of the school day. Others allow limited use at lunch or between classes. Virginia recently announced a statewide plan for “phone-free education,” and New York is pursuing legislation along similar lines. Governors say the goal is not punishment but restoring schools as places for focus, human connection, and learning.

Teachers are among the strongest voices calling for change. [A Pew study](#) found 7 in 10 teachers believe phone distraction is a major classroom problem, and many say it’s contributing to burnout and even teacher shortages.

How Families Can Adapt

Even if your state hasn’t acted yet, you can prepare your child for a phone-free classroom:

- **Set expectations at home:** Practice short “no-phone” windows—during dinner, homework, or family outings.
- **Talk about the “why”:** Explain that phones are designed to grab attention. Removing them isn’t about control; it’s about protecting focus, friendships, and wellbeing.
- **Offer alternatives for emergencies:** Watches, school office calls, or simple written schedules can provide peace of mind.
- **Encourage real connection:** When phones aren’t an option, kids naturally turn to friends, sports, or creative play. That’s the point.

The Bigger Picture

Makary calls phones in schools a “public health issue”—and many parents agree. School is where children should be developing social muscles, not scrolling endlessly. For families who value resilience, faith, and strong communities, these policies are about protecting the conditions kids need to thrive.

Phones won’t disappear from our lives. But limiting them in classrooms sends a clear message: the school day is for learning, movement, and real-life connection. **And when parents, teachers, and leaders are aligned, *kids benefit most*.**

Kids Need to Move: Why Active Play Builds Stronger, Healthier Families

We all know kids have energy to burn, but movement is about more than just keeping them busy. Regular activity, whether through organized sports or simple unstructured play, supports a child’s mental, emotional, and physical development. And in a world of screens and packed schedules, creating space for kids to move is one of the best gifts we can give them.

Why Movement Matters

Decades of research show that active kids aren't just healthier — they're happier and more resilient. Movement helps.

- **Boost focus and learning:** Just [20 minutes of exercise](#) can improve attention and academic performance.
- **Protect mental health:** [Activity lowers](#) stress hormones, improves sleep, and reduces risk of depression and anxiety.
- **Build confidence and independence:** Whether it’s learning a new skill in sports or inventing rules for a backyard game, [movement helps](#) kids test limits and problem-solve.
- **Foster creativity and resilience:** [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) notes that unstructured play is essential for developing imagination, social skills, and coping strategies.

Beyond the Playing Field

Not every child thrives on team sports, and that’s okay. Movement can take many forms:

- **Unstructured outdoor play:** Climbing trees, riding bikes, jumping rope, playing tag—these activities build strength, balance, and creativity without uniforms or fees.
- **Family routines:** Walks after dinner, yard games on weekends, or hiking local trails make movement a family value and create lasting memories.
- **Everyday “micro-moments”:** Parking farther from the store, walking the dog together, or turning on music for a five-minute dance break. Small steps add up.
- **Community opportunities:** Rec leagues, church teams, martial arts studios, or “no-cut” school activities offer movement in low-pressure environments.

How Parents Can Encourage It

- **Set aside tech-free time:** Without screens, kids are more likely to reach for a ball, a bike, or a sibling to play with.
- **Give kids space to lead:** Let them decide the game—it helps with creativity and buy-in.
- **Celebrate effort, not just wins:** Whether they score a goal or build a fort, acknowledge the energy and imagination behind it.
- **Model the habit:** Kids mirror parents. If they see you moving—gardening, walking, stretching—they’ll follow.

The Bigger Picture

Movement isn’t just about physical fitness. It’s about raising kids who are confident, resilient, and connected to the real world. Organized sports have their place, but so do chasing fireflies in the backyard or inventing a new game on the playground.

The point is simple: when children move, they grow — in body, mind, and spirit. And when families carve out time for it, we’re building not just healthier kids, but stronger communities.

Vaccines in the Headlines

Few issues spark more division than vaccines — and the latest headlines prove it. President Trump’s recent comments about the childhood vaccine schedule have stirred debate, raising questions about how shots are timed, combined, or spread out.



FEW ISSUES SPARK MORE DIVISION THAN VACCINES

How parents can cut through the
noise and make confident
decisions for their family



[Our latest post on Instagram](#) breaks down what was said, why guidance changes, and how parents can cut through the noise to make confident, informed choices for their families.

SEE THE LATEST HERE

FACT OR MYTH?

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Protecting kids from struggle
makes them stronger.

MYTH: Resilience comes from experiencing age-appropriate challenges. Studies show that children who work through small failures with parental support build confidence, independence, and healthier coping skills that last a lifetime.

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**



TURN COOKING INTO A BONDING GAME



Turn meal prep into a bonding game.

Give each child one “job” (like washing veggies, stirring sauce, or setting the table) and let them take ownership of that step. Kids are more likely to try (and enjoy) healthy food when they’ve had a hand in making it—and you get a little help in the kitchen, too!

A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT



Dear Friends,

Lately, it feels like every headline raises new questions about our children's wellbeing — phones in schools, debates over health policies, the constant pull of screens. It can be a lot to take in, and as parents, it sometimes feels like the ground is always shifting under our feet.

But resilience isn't built in political debates or news cycles. It's built in our homes, in the small daily moments where our children learn to trust, adapt, and grow. Research shows that kids who work through challenges with the steady presence of their parents develop stronger coping skills, healthier relationships, and greater confidence later in life.

That's why I want to encourage you this week to lean into the ordinary acts that matter most: sitting down for a meal without phones, taking a short walk after dinner, letting your kids help in the kitchen, or simply asking about their day and really listening. These simple choices build the deep roots of resilience—reminding our children they are safe, loved, and equipped to face whatever comes their way.

Thank you for being part of this community. When families stay rooted in connection and consistency, children carry that foundation with them into every part of their lives.

Warmly,

Siobhan Dunnivant, MD

Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

PRODUCE OF THE MONTH



EASY SCHOOL NIGHT DINNER RECIPE

MASON JAR RAMEN

Quick, cozy, and customizable. These ramen jars are a busy-night lifesaver: prep the layers in

advance, then just add boiling water when it's time to eat. Everyone can build their own with favorite veggies, protein, and toppings!

DOWNLOAD TO SAVE THIS RECIPE FOR LATER

ENGAGE WITH US

What's one issue in today's news or culture where you wish parents had clearer guidance or more agreement?

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. Dunnivant. Get involved and help us keep our children safe and healthy!



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