



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

Bedtime Talks: A Nighttime Routine that Builds Stronger Kids

Most days are busy. By bedtime, it can feel like you've spent more time correcting than connecting. That's exactly why a calm, consistent nighttime routine and a few honest minutes of conversation matters. It signals safety, teaches emotional skills, and reminds your child: *"We're on the same team."*

Why bedtime conversations work

- **Predictability lowers stress.** A repeatable routine tells the brain it's safe to power down, making sleep easier and mornings smoother.
- **Attachment grows in quiet moments.** When the day's noise fades, kids are most open to hearing you and being heard.
- **Emotional coaching happens naturally.** Sharing your day models how to name feelings, reflect, and problem-solve.

- **Behavior improves tomorrow.** Children who feel seen are more likely to cooperate; connection fuels compliance.

What to share — and why it helps

- **What you did well:** “I finished a project I was nervous about.” This builds a growth mindset and shows effort matters.
- **Something fun or simple:** “I tried a new coffee and it tasted SO good.” Kids learn to notice small joys, not just big wins.
- **Something hard:** “A meeting got tense; I felt frustrated. I took a walk and asked a teammate for help.” You’re teaching vocabulary for feelings and healthy coping.

Kid-friendly prompts to keep it two-way

- **High/low/learn:** “What was the best part, the tough part, and something you learned today?”
- **Rose/bud/thorn:** “A good thing, something you’re looking forward to, and a prickly moment.”
- **Feelings menu:** “Did you feel proud, bored, excited, worried, or silly today? When?”
- **Connection close:** “How can I help tomorrow feel easier?”

On tough days when you felt like a drill sergeant

- **Name it and reset:** “I was snappy today. I’m sorry. I love you, and I want us to have a calmer tomorrow.”
- **Give one clear hope:** “Let’s try a five-minute cleanup race after dinner so bedtime is smoother.”
- **End with warmth:** A hug, a squeeze, or a forehead kiss—a physical cue that you’re okay together.

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If you have multiple kids

- Rotate a “spotlight night” so each child gets a few uninterrupted minutes.
- Use sibling helpers: one reads while you talk one-on-one with another.
- Keep a shared ritual (song/story) but protect one private question per child.

The big picture

You’re not trying to run perfect nights. You’re building a dependable bridge your child can walk across especially on days when everything else felt like barking orders. A steady bedtime routine plus a few honest sentences about your day teaches kids that feelings can be named, problems can be worked through, and home is a safe place to land.

Start small tonight. One anchor, one share, one question. Repeat tomorrow. Connection compounds.

What Is ACIP? A Guide for Parents

[ACIP](#) (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) is the group that reviews data and [advises](#) the CDC on how vaccines should be used in everyday medical practice in the United States. Their votes shape CDC’s recommendations and the immunization schedules many clinicians follow. They don’t license vaccines (that’s the FDA), they don’t make laws, and states set school and daycare requirements.

What ACIP Is (and Isn’t)

- **What it is:** A federal advisory committee of independent experts that reviews data on diseases and vaccines, then votes on recommendations like which vaccines to give, at

what ages, how many doses, and when not to give them.

- **What it isn't:** ACIP does not decide whether a vaccine is safe, effective, and manufactured to quality standards (that's the FDA). ACIP's job is the "how to use" steps that follow. It also doesn't make laws — states decide school or daycare requirements.

How ACIP Is Structured

ACIP operates under a public-transparency law called the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). That means meetings are noticed publicly, generally open to the public, minutes are posted, and a designated federal officer must be present.

Who Sits on ACIP?

Voting members are medical and public-health professionals (pediatricians, infectious-disease physicians, epidemiologists). They're screened before selection and must disclose conflicts of interest at every meeting; if a conflict exists, they recuse from discussion and voting on that topic. ACIP also includes non-voting liaison representatives from professional groups (like the AAP) and ex officio federal members.

How Recommendations Are Made

Work groups study disease burden, clinical trial data, safety monitoring, feasibility in clinics, and patient/parent preferences. The full committee discusses and votes in public session. If adopted by the CDC Director, the recommendation is published in MMWR and reflected in the U.S. immunization schedules.

What ACIP Guidance Means for Parents

- **It's guidance, not a mandate.** Your pediatrician uses ACIP as a starting point and adjusts based on your child's history, health conditions, and timing. You can ask about spacing, alternatives, or contraindications.
- **Insurance coverage:** Under federal law ([42 U.S.C. § 300gg-13](#)), most private health plans cover ACIP-recommended vaccines without cost-sharing once the recommendation is in effect. That's intended to remove cost barriers, not to compel a choice.

- **School/daycare rules:** Those are set by states. If you're weighing timing options, ask your pediatrician what's recommended versus what your state requires at school entry.

How to Track or Participate in the Process

- [Watch meetings live or on archive](#); review slide decks to see the exact data being discussed.
- **Comment publicly.** Written comments typically go through Regulations.gov; oral comment slots are available in many meetings. Instructions and deadlines are posted with each agenda.
- **Read the final language.** The binding text is what appears in MMWR after the CDC Director adopts a vote.

ACIP vs. FDA: Who Does What?

- **FDA** (often via its advisory panel, VRBPAC) evaluates whether a vaccine is safe, effective, and manufactured to quality standards—this is licensure/authorization.
- **ACIP** asks the “how to use” questions: who benefits most, dose timing, contraindications, and how recommendations fit into real-world clinics and programs. This sequencing is why you'll sometimes see FDA action followed by an ACIP meeting weeks later.

For Parents Who Want Options

You shouldn't feel rushed or talked down to. Use ACIP as one input, then make decisions that fit your child and your values. At your next visit, you can ask:

- Which vaccines are most important for my child right now—and why?
- Are there alternatives (separate components) or timing options? What are the trade-offs?
- What are common side effects versus true contraindications?
- How would you adjust if my child has [specific condition/allergy/history]? Bring the source materials if you like: the current schedule, the specific ACIP vote language, and the [Vaccine Information Statements](#).

If You're Watching for Bias or Pressure

That's reasonable. Here are concrete checks you can make:

1. [Meeting materials and voting records](#): posted publicly—review the evidence cited. ACIP archives.
2. [Member disclosures](#): skim the conflict-of-interest page for the topic you care about. COI disclosures.
3. [Final text over headlines](#): rely on the MMWR publication rather than news summaries to see what was actually adopted.

ACIP is one piece of the decision-making puzzle: a public, trackable process that informs (but doesn't dictate) your family's choices.

Use the process to your advantage: read across sources, bring pointed questions to your pediatrician, and make decisions on a case-by-case basis for your child. Parents are the first and best advocates for their kids. **Our job is to make sure you have clear, unbiased information so you can decide with confidence.**

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

FACT OR MYTH?

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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**



Holiday Helper Day

Give a real job. Build real pride.



Fold wrapping
paper scraps



Place bows



Organize cards



Choose
cookies for
a neighbor



Stick gift
tags & tape



Recycle
paper bits

I'm
today's
helper!

healthy
kids:

Choose one afternoon to let your child be the “Holiday Helper.”

Give them age-appropriate tasks like folding wrapping paper scraps, placing bows, organizing cards, or choosing cookies for a neighbor. Kids feel proud when they have real responsibility and it turns seasonal chores into quality time together.

A NOTE FROM DR. DUNNAVANT



Dear Friends,

As we get closer to the end of the year, the pace somehow picks up even more. School is winding down, lists are getting longer, and the days drag on and go by in the blink of an eye at the same time. In all that holiday bustle, here's a piece of advice I wish someone had told me when my kids were little: this season isn't made special by perfection.

Kids notice far less about the “right” wrapping paper or the matchy outfits than we think. What they hold onto are the small, steady moments with us—helping decorate the house or tape a gift, stirring the cookie dough (and sneaking a taste), or riding around the neighborhood to look at decorations. These moments teach them that home is a place where they're seen, included, and safe.

So if your week feels scattered or stretched, take heart. You don't need elaborate plans to make this time meaningful. A calm bedtime chat, a shared laugh in the kitchen, or a simple

walk after dinner can reset the whole day. Your steadiness grounds them more than any tradition ever could.

Wishing you moments of peace tucked inside the busy—and a holiday filled with love, joy, and time together.

Warmly,

Siobhan Dunnavant, MD

Senior Advisor, Advocates for Healthy Kids

EASY HOLIDAY BREAKFAST RECIPE

CHRISTMAS TREE WAFFLES

A fun, colorful breakfast that kids can help decorate. Whole-grain waffles are stacked into tree shapes and topped with yogurt, berries, and nuts for a festive, nutritious start to the day. Perfect for school mornings or holiday weekend breakfasts.



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

ENGAGE WITH US

How do you let your kids help “create the magic” of the season in your home?

[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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