

Talking with Parents: Staying on Track with Childhood Vaccines

As a health care provider, parents trust you, even if they have questions about recommended childhood vaccines. Help make sure they get real answers.

For parents who are hesitant about the recommended vaccine schedule, your empathy and willingness to listen can help them feel more confident in their decisions.



Use this guide to help address parents' questions around vaccine schedules.

- **Acknowledge Concerns Without Judgment:** "I hear that [insert issue or concern]. You're not alone. I hear that from other parents. As your pediatrician, we have a shared goal and that is to keep your child healthy. Let's talk through this together."
- **Explain Why the Recommended Schedule Matters:** "The vaccine schedule is designed to protect children, starting at the ages when they are most vulnerable to serious illness. Delaying vaccines leaves your child unprotected. Any length of time without a vaccine is time without protection from a preventable disease."
- **If Appropriate, Gently Dispel the Myth of 'Too Many, Too Soon':** "Children are exposed to thousands of germs every day. Compared to what children's immune systems handle daily, the exposure from a vaccine is very small. Getting multiple vaccines in one visit is safe and makes sure your child is protected. It also means fewer office visits for your family. Serious side effects from vaccines are extremely rare. Millions of children are safely vaccinated each year – including when multiple shots are given together."
- **Discuss the Risks of Delaying:** "Delaying increases the chance that your child is exposed to a preventable disease without being protected – and that means they could get really sick. Spacing out vaccines can lead to missed doses, especially during busy seasons or if illnesses or travel come up."
- **Offer a Partnership, Not Pressure:** "I want to work with you on this. If you're worried about giving multiple shots at once, let's talk through why each one is important and what the risks of delay might be. My goal isn't to rush you, but to help you feel confident in a plan that keeps your child safe."
- **Provide a Roadmap & Reassurance:** "If your child falls behind, we can create a catch-up schedule—but it's always better to stay on track when possible. We can also plan comfort strategies if you're worried about your child's reaction to multiple shots. For instance, there are different ways you can hold your child to help them feel more comfortable and even lessen the pain."
- **Offer Reliable Resources:** "Let me share some information from groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics, which is made up of pediatricians and scientists who help review the latest data each year to make sure the schedule is safe and effective."

For more information and other resources to help you talk with parents about childhood vaccines, visit VaccinesForKids.nc.gov.

