

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Immunization Program



Strong Provider Recommendations Improve Immunization Acceptance

Immunizations are safe, effective, and a standard of care. Despite their proven effectiveness, however, some parents continue to hesitate to immunize their children for a variety of reasons. While not all these reasons are easy to address, it is clear that the strength and format of recommendations made by pediatricians and family physicians are critical determinants – especially for parents who are uncertain.

We know that:

- 1. Parents trust recommendations made by their child’s provider.**
- 2. Parents want to be able to ask questions, but too much information can be confusing.**
- 3. Providers who use a presumptive approach (“Your child needs the following immunizations today...”), rather than a participatory approach (“What would you like to do about immunizations today?”), have much higher immunization acceptance rates.**
- 4. A health care provider recommendation is the single most important determinant of whether or not someone gets vaccinated.**

For these reasons, AAP, AAFP, CDC, and the MDPH all recommend that providers make a strong recommendation for routine immunization during visits. Although each provider will have his/her own style, the following considerations can serve as a guide:

To make a strong immunization recommendation:

- 1. Start vaccine discussions with “Your child needs the following vaccines today...”**
- 2. For parents with vaccine hesitancy, acknowledge that this is an important decision and also reinforce that vaccines are very safe and very important and that it is your strong recommendation that the child really needs to receive them.**
- 3. Be prepared to answer questions when asked - either directly or through on-line resources.**

This approach has been shown to be effective and has the potential to substantially improve immunization delivery, especially for adolescent patients.

For questions, and technical assistance, please contact the MDPH immunization program at 617-983-6800 and ask to speak to an immunization nurse. Please see next page for additional resources and references.

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Additional resources:

CDC Provider Resources for Immunization Conversations with Parents

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/index.html>

AAP Communication with Families Web page

<http://www2.aap.org/immunization/pediatricians/communicating.html>

AAP Immunization Training Guide

www2.aap.org/immunization/pediatricians/trainingguide.html

Tips and Time-savers for Talking with Parents about HPV Vaccine

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/for-hcp-tipsheet-hpv.pdf>

References:

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3. Healy, CM, Montesinos DP, Middleman, AB. Parent and Provider Perspectives on Immunization: Are Providers Overestimating Parental Concerns? *Vaccine* 2014;32:570-584.
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4. Nyhan, B, Reifler, J, Richey, S, and Freed, GL. Effective Messages in Vaccine Promotion: A Randomized Trial. *Pediatrics* 2014;133:1-8.
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