

NORTH SHORE PARENTS



Your child calls you by your first name. Now what?

BY ANDREEA CIULAC
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Q: Your child starts calling you by your first name. You're not comfortable with this. Should you address it right away or wait to see if it's just a phase?

This is not uncommon with children, especially younger children. Once they learn you have a name other than mommy or daddy, they will most certainly explore the use of that name.

You should address it right away.

I had this situation with my daughter, when she was younger, and this was what I told her: "Yes, that is my name. I have a name just as you do, but because I am your mommy, that's what you would call me. Out of respect, you are not to call me by my first name."

Also, if the kid gets lost in a store and someone asks his parents' names, he will know those are the names he is supposed to use. In terms of etiquette, it's one of the first ways to introduce

our children to authority figures, to address these people by their proper titles.

— Elaine Swann, speaker, author and etiquette expert

If your kid calls you by your first name and you don't like it, tell him so. Right away.

Reacting the first time allows you to keep the stakes low — and maybe even to gain some insight about your kid. Throw your kid a look of bemused surprise, and say something like, "You just called me Lauren instead of mom. What's up with that?"

Your kid may actually provide an interesting answer. Maybe his new friend at school calls his parents by their first names. Maybe using your first name makes him feel mature, or maybe he's angling for increased independence and wants to signal to you that he's ready to be more than mommy's sweet little boy.

If you feel a conversation opening up, dive in. While the talk certainly shouldn't



Tribune News Service

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end with your agreeing to be called something you're not comfortable with, it may still lead to a new understanding of what's going on in your kid's precious — but often totally mystifying — head.

— Elaine Rose Glickman, parenting advice columnist, former teacher and author of "Your Kid's a Brat and It's All Your Fault: Nip the

Attitude in the Bud — from *Toddler to Tween*"

Q: Your child hears you cursing and asks what it means. What should you say?

If your child is very young, you should be honest, but keep your reaction and information to a minimum. Try saying, "That is a rude word adults say when they are very upset. I should not

have said it."

Then maybe add, "There are better words like, 'I am so mad' or, 'Ouch, that really hurt.'"

If he or she imitates you and uses the word, explain that it's not OK. A child may try swearing to appear older and to impress friends. Say, "I understand you are curious about words, but they must be used wisely."

I don't recommend lying to a child about the meaning of a word. He or she will discover the truth and learn that you lied. The kid may wonder what else you have lied about and feel betrayal and lack of trust. He or she will also be more likely to use lying as a way out of sticky situations.

— Alyson Schafer, family therapist and author of "Honey, I Wrecked the Kids"

This isn't something you need to beat yourself up about. It's not as if your child is going to learn these words from you — he or she already learned them from friends or siblings.

The more you agonize about these words, the more powerful your kid will come to learn they are.

My approach with my 2½-year-old son is just to be honest. Even a young child can understand that sometimes people use certain words when they experience strong emotions, like frustration, stress or elation.

You teach a child to do certain things in the potty but not on the couch. Similarly you can mentor him or her in how to figure out if a particular social setting is the kind of place where strong language will have negative consequences — like school — or if it's the kind of place where swearing will somehow have positive consequences — making him feel relaxed.

— Benjamin K. Bergen, professor of cognitive science at the University of California, San Diego, and author of "What the F: What Swearing Reveals About Our Language, Our Brains, and Ourselves"

5 ways to persuade a picky eater

FAMILY FEATURES

For parents with a picky eater, it may seem that no amount of coaxing or prodding will get that little mouth in motion. A fresh approach may be all you need to make mealtime a more enjoyable experience for all.

Proper nourishment is essential for a child's development, so when a battle of wills erupts over food, it can leave parents feeling especially frustrated and concerned about their child's well-being. Fortunately, there are several strategies you can adapt to get mealtime on track and healthy eating habits underway.

Make a one-bite rule. A simple fact is that not everyone likes everything when it comes to food. Allow your child a sense of control in making decisions about the foods he or she likes or dislikes. When offering new items, implement a rule that requires trying at least one bite. Then, if he or she declines more, set it aside and focus on the other foods you are offering. Remember, tastes change over time — even day to day for some kids — so don't be afraid to try again in the future.

Keep it simple. In an effort to entice kids to eat, some well-intentioned parents offer too many choices, which can be overwhelming.

Instead, limit the options and let them pick from two meal options, such as a turkey sandwich or a peanut butter and jelly.

Approach meals like building blocks. Think of each meal as a tower of blocks you're teaching your child to stack. The bottom piece, the sturdy foundation, is a familiar food he or she willingly accepts, like chicken or noodles. Then layer on additional pieces, such as adding a sauce with pureed veggies or a new protein.

Create a sense of ownership. Kids are more likely to eat when they can take pride in the fruits of their labor. Enlist their help picking recipes and selecting

foods at the grocery store, and encourage them to help make the foods they selected. Much like prized hand-made artwork, children enjoy showing and sharing the things they make all by themselves.

Offer a fun incentive. Make mealtime an interactive experience with tableware that makes eating fun. Dinner Winner, by specialty giftware company Fred, is an award-winning kid's dinner tray divided into small sections like a board game, where parents can portion out food into manageable bites along the path. The goal is to get to the finish line where a special covered treat awaits, providing



Photo courtesy of Jen Anderson

There are several strategies you can adapt to get mealtime on track and healthy eating habits underway.

motivation for children to eat their entire meal. The food-safe and dishwasher-safe plate is available in four styles — Original, Pirates, Supper Hero and Enchanted Forest — and features

encouraging phrases like "keep it up" and "almost there."

Find more kid-friendly solutions for mealtime and beyond at fredandfriends.com.

Keeping families active in cooler temperatures

FAMILY FEATURES

As the weather gets colder, it can be harder to motivate kids to step away from their computers and devices and get off the couch. It's essential, however, for kids to participate in active play all year round. According to research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.

Sadly, physical activity is becoming less of a priority in kids' daily routines. A recent survey conducted by Let's Play, an initiative from Dr Pepper Snapple Group to make active play a daily priority, found that 64 percent of parents said busy schedules stand in the way of more active play for their

children, up from 56 percent in 2015.

Each season brings its own opportunities for play, and fall is no exception. Families can beat the cold weather blues and stay active together by trying some of the following activities:

Plan a nature walk to find inspiration and materials for art. Even though it's chilly outside, your family can still get out and enjoy the outdoors. Bundle up and take a nature hike with your kids around the neighborhood or at a local, national or state park. Encourage your kids to collect items like pinecones, acorns and leaves as you go and to be on the lookout for wildlife to observe. After the hike, take out art-and-craft supplies and help them create projects with the items they found.

Plan an indoor scavenger hunt. When a really cold day



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

A nature hike with your kids around the neighborhood or at a park is a great way to stay warm and burn off some energy as the weather cools.

comes along, send your kids on a fun and active scavenger hunt around the house, searching for items that you can hide in advance. Work together as a family to locate the items or create some friendly-family

competition to see who can find all the items first. Having the family move around the house with a mission prevents the temptation of staying on the couch in front of the television all day.

Join a class or indoor sports

team. Whether you are playing a favorite sport or learning a new one, it is always more fun with other people. Longer stretches of active play are often more likely to occur with friends or siblings. Sign your children

up for an indoor sport or class they have never tried before, such as gymnastics, rock climbing, swimming or dance. This allows your children to learn something new, meet kids their age and be active for an extended period of time.

Volunteer. While giving back is always in season, this time of year is a perfect opportunity to teach kids about giving back to those in need and being grateful for what they have. Sign the whole family up to volunteer at a local soup kitchen, participate in a toy drive for a children's hospital or help out at an animal rescue shelter. Your children will not only be active, but will also grow emotionally, socially and intellectually as a result.

For more tips on how to keep kids active and to find play inspiration for all seasons, visit LetsPlay.com.

Can Cinderella and Elsa convince kids to eat vegetables?

BY ABHA BHATTARAI
THE WASHINGTON POST

It's come to this, America: Disney-branded fruits and vegetables.

Dole Food Co. said it is partnering with the entertainment giant to market fresh produce to children across the country. Characters from "Star Wars," Marvel and Pixar will now help hawk blueberries, bananas and broccoli.

"Disney and Dole have a shared mission of providing high-quality produce to help families lead healthier lives," Josh Silverman, executive vice president of global licensing at Disney, said in a statement.

The companies did not disclose the terms of the deal, or whether Disney-branded produce will be priced higher than non-branded fruits and vegetables when they hit grocery shelves beginning next month.

Last year, Disney partnered with Sage Fruit Co. for a similar campaign to promote the movie "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." Darth Vader helped market bags of apples, while Yoda hawked green grapes.

Using well-known characters to sell nutrition is nothing new. Popeye the Sailor famously convinced kids to eat spinach, while generations have grown up chewing Flintstones vitamins. In the 1990s, hundreds of dairy-mustached celebrities helped revive milk's popularity with the "Got Milk?" advertising campaign.

"It's not difficult to slap a character on a food and get kids to love it," said Rob Frankel, a Los Angeles-based branding expert. "But these days, anybody who tries to sell anything to kids also has to appeal to the parents. This is a way for Disney to prove to mom and dad: See? We care about the health of your



Courtesy photo

Disney and Dole Food Co. have partnered to offer high-quality produce to families.

kids."

That's different from the way items were marketed in the 1970s and '80s, Frankel said. Back then, advertisers were focused squarely

on appealing to children. General Mills, for example, marketed its popular line of sugar-laden cereals with characters like Franken Berry and Count Chocula,

while Pillsbury used cartoon figures Goofy Grape, Lefty Lemonade and Freckle-Faced Strawberry to promote its line of Funny Face powdered drinks.

"It was all about the 'mag factor,'" Frankel said. "If companies sold the kids on it, eventually they'd whine and beg enough that mom and dad would buy it."

But that began to change in the 1990s, he said, as baby boomers took a more hands-on approach to parenting. "All these helicopter parents needed to be told, 'Mom and dad, here's the best thing for your kid,'" Frankel said.

As a result, companies shifted their marketing tactics to appeal to parents. They began adding phrases like "all natural" and "no sugar" to their labels, and emphasized health-related benefits. Disney's partnership with Dole is a step even further in that direction, Frankel said.

"Now they can get you from both sides," Frankel said. "The kid is happy because it's got a Disney princess on it, and mom feels good because she's buying a vegetable."

How much digital media is OK for kids?

Experts say there's no one-size-fits-all approach

By JONEL ALECCIA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

In today's media-saturated world, nearly every parent has handed a kid a smartphone or a tablet for learning or play.

And nearly every parent has wondered if it's OK.

New guidelines released recently by the American Academy of Pediatrics suggest that media use is nearly inevitable, but it's up to parents to closely monitor their children's digital diets from the start.

Researchers say too much media or the wrong type of content may affect kids' health and development and interfere with relationships with family and the larger world.

For babies and toddlers, kids younger than 2, videochatting with Grandma is

fine, but that's about it, said Dr. Dimitri Christakis, lead author of the guidelines for children from newborns to age 5.

Other digital media should be avoided, especially before 18 months, and after that they should contain only high-quality content experienced with a parent, not alone.

"Babies need laps more than apps, to be sure," said Christakis, a pediatrician and researcher at Seattle Children's Hospital.

For kids ages 2 to 5, media should be limited to one hour a day — down from the two hours included in previous recommendations. Again, media should focus on high-quality programming — the authors mention "Sesame Street" — and the experiences should be shared by parents and kids.

That's because in children older than 3, digital media may help teach kids new concepts, but in younger children the brain isn't developed enough to transfer the two-dimensional view of the screen to the real world, research has shown.

While they're at it, parents should avoid using smartphones or other devices as the main way to distract or calm small children, Christakis said.

"Children need to learn to self-regulate their emotions," he said.

With older kids, those ages 6 to 18, parents need to be even more proactive, said Dr. Megan Moreno, an investigator at Seattle Children's Research Institute and lead author of the guidelines for older kids.

There are no hard-and-fast limits on hours spent

engaged with phones, tablets, computers and video games. Instead, parents and other caregivers should develop a family plan that regards digital-media use as one component of a healthy life.

"We have moved beyond the one-size-fits-all approach we had in the past," Moreno said.

To help, the AAP has created an interactive, online tool, the "Family Media Use Plan," to use as a guide. Find it at www.HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan.

Parents need to work out consistent limits to ensure that time spent with digital media doesn't disrupt adequate sleep, physical exercise, family communication and other healthy behaviors.

In particular, the guidelines recommend enforcing media-free family times during meals and for an hour each night before bedtime. Devices should be banned from bedrooms, where 10 years of research show they can interfere with healthy sleep patterns in kids, Moreno said.

All this is easier said than done, said Moreno, who consults with parents and kids regularly in her pediatric clinic.

"In more than half my visits with new patients, something about media is coming up," she said. "If it's a visit about sleeping



Tribune News Service

Researchers say that while media use is inevitable, too much media or the wrong type of content may affect kids' health and development, and interfere with relationships with family and the larger world.

or fatigue, it's media. If it's abdominal pain, it may be linked to bullying and that has an angle to technology. It's just woven into the fabric of our existence."

In 1970, children typically began watching TV at age 4. Today, children begin interacting with digital media at 4 months, research has shown.

In 2013, three-quarters of kids ages newborn to 8 had access to a mobile device, according to a national survey of parents.

Too much media use has been linked not only to sleep problems, but also to obesity. Limited research suggests it may also affect child development.

When digital media first emerged, teens were the

first users, and parents weren't sure whether — or how — to monitor use of the emerging technology, Moreno said.

Now, however, it's clear that parents need to weigh in on overall media use early and often.

"It's quite OK for a parent not to know what Instagram is," Moreno said. "It's really OK for kids to be the tech experts, but we want parents to take the reins of being the health and safety experts in their kids' lives."

Finally, parents need to monitor their own media use around kids as well, Christakis said.

"It's distracted parenting," he said. "You can't parent as well when you're checking your phone."

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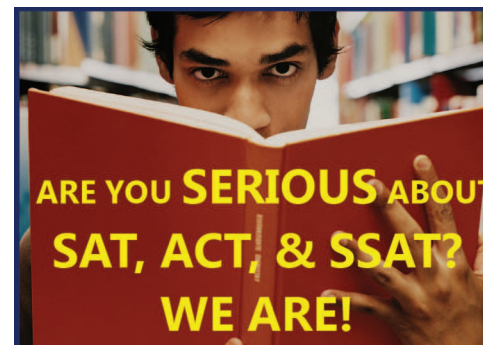
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Consider building kids' confidence instead of entitlement

BY DANIELLE BRAFF
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

At the Illinois Music Association's annual piano competition, three pianists in each level win trophies ranking them from first to third place.

Inevitably, there are more than a few teary children who don't medal. Those kids can get lollipops. If the sugar doesn't help, parents can purchase award ribbons, so that although they lost the competition, the kids can still feel like winners.

At a time when children are presented with awards for participating or even showing up, it's not surprising that parents can purchase a ribbon. But every time we give our children an award for something they didn't legitimately achieve, we're doing them a disservice that can last significantly longer than the

high of receiving the award lasts, said Chris Hudson, founder of Understanding Teenagers.

"Ironically, participation medals don't build confidence, but they do create entitlement," Hudson said. "Confidence and resilience don't come from false praise or rewarding normal behavior."

While parents may believe that the trophies and ribbons build confidence, the real confidence comes from actively encouraging the kids as they take risks, apply themselves and make a real effort to get something done, Hudson said.

The most supportive parents are those who understand that love and support should be unconditional and untethered from performance, and should focus on process rather than product, said Jessica Lahey, author of "The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to

Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed."

She has her own advice: "Treat a low grade and a high grade similarly through a focus on process: 'What did you do to get that grade?' or 'What study strategies worked this time around, and what might you change for next time?' rather than focus on the product," Lahey said.

Process is the most important thing for parents and children to focus on, rather than the end result, she said. This is the highly controllable, education-rich environment, which leads to confidence and learning.

And if parents praise children for doing a great job at sports games, competitions or on an art project — when, in fact, they just went through the motions — kids know better, and it does no good, Lahey said.

"When a child asks a parent, 'Do you like this

painting?' the best possible answer is, 'What do you think of your painting?'" she suggested.

The earlier parents can help children develop their sense of self, which is their internal barometer to measure the quality of their own work.

"Our opinion of their creative genius, in the end, no matter how warranted, means very little until they can tell the difference between a slipshod effort and a breakthrough, bravura performance," Lahey said.

Still, sometimes, a child works hard and still fails.

That's all part of the learning process, which builds confidence, Lahey said.

"It is not just important to allow kids to fail and to experience the natural consequences of those failures, it's the basis for learning," she said. "Kids learn from seeing efforts

fail, reassessing their strategy — maybe even throwing the strategy out the window altogether and coming up with an entirely new one — and trying again to see how that new strategy works."

Lahey said that the most fulfilled people she knows continue to learn throughout their lifetime through failure, and she doesn't know any brave, curious and accomplished adult who hasn't figure out how to transform mistakes into learning.

But it's very difficult for most parents to simply step back and let their child fail, though children make mistakes all the time, said Madeline Levine, psychologist and author of "Teach Your Children Well."

"You see how many hundreds of times kids make mistakes, and if we think of those things as failures, it's depressing, and it doesn't distill confidence," Levine

said. "You have to allow for the fact that there's a learning curve. We get in the way of our kids' outcomes when we are so focused on the product."

Last year, Erik Fisher, psychologist and author of "The Art of Empowered Parenting," watched his daughter fail in front of all of her friends.

"We tried to give her some guidance that she should be practicing more," Fisher said.

"Her act in the talent show fell apart, as we thought it might, and she cried afterward, but the next act was a dance she was doing, so she had to get back out there, and she performed wonderfully," Fisher said.

When they got home, Fisher asked his daughter what she thought went well, what she could have done better and what she learned from her experience.

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Take precautions to be safe this holiday season

FAMILY FEATURES

Although good tidings and joy abound during the holiday season, this time of year can also pose a serious threat to your family, friends and home. The holidays bring an elevated risk for fires and burns, and many Americans may have a false sense of security.

A new survey conducted by Shriners Hospitals for Children shows that most Americans know basic fire and burn safety tips but do not practice them in the home. Failure to implement safety precautions only adds to the danger.

A myriad of seasonal activities puts the action indoors, where families gather for cooking, decorating and other pursuits that may involve an open flame. Unfortunately, enjoying some of those treasured pastimes means the risk of house fires and burns increases drastically.

Many burn injuries and fire risks can be avoided by practicing a few simple safety measures. Shriners Hospitals has provided some practical steps to keep your home and family safe.

Seasonal decor

Live Christmas trees need water daily. According to the survey, however, less than half of Americans perform the task. A dry tree can ignite in seconds,



Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Holiday cooking is the leading cause of residential building fires in the month of December. With more cooking during this time, the risk of house fires and pediatric burns increases drastically.

making tree fires one of the most dangerous types. Well-watered trees significantly reduce this risk. Set a reminder to add water daily to keep your tree safe and supple throughout the season.

Choosing the right place for your tree involves many variables. As you select the perfect vantage point, remember to keep trees away from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, candles or heat vents.

Consider using wickless or flameless candles. There are numerous inexpensive options that cast a warm, flickering glow so you can enjoy the ambiance of a lit candle without the risk.

Lights and electricity

Before installing

decorative lights on a house or a tree, closely inspect each strand for frayed wires, bare spots and excessive kinking or wear. Discard and replace any lights that show signs of damage, which can pose a fire hazard.

Nearly half of survey respondents admitted they overload electrical outlets. During the holiday season, when you are likely to have more decorations, lights and other electrical items in use, take extra care to prevent overburdening an outlet and use certified surge protectors and power strips.

Exposed electrical cords and uncovered outlets can attract the attention of inquisitive children. Take care to secure cords out of



A dry holiday tree can ignite in seconds, making tree fires one of the most dangerous types. To significantly reduce this risk, be sure to water your live tree every day.

reach and cover any outlets not in use.

Despite the obvious risk of leaving lit candles unattended, 27 percent of Americans admit to this practice and 25 percent of respondents report leaving them in reach of a child. If you must use a flame-burning candle, do so only while you are in the room and extinguish any lit candles if the room will be vacant.

Cooking safety

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, holiday cooking is the leading cause of residential building fires in the month of December. With more cooking during this time, the risk of house fires and pediatric burns increases drastically. Out-turned handles can be easily grasped by curious hands or snag on clothing or aprons and potentially scald a youngster underfoot. Be sure to turn pot handles toward the back of the stove, out of children's reach.

Follow the lead of nearly 50 percent of Americans who know to keep a lid or cookie sheet nearby when

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Since the 1960s, Shriners Hospitals for Children has been a leader in burn care, research and education. During this time, the survival rate has doubled for children with burns over more than 50 percent of their bodies. Today, patients with burns over 90 percent can survive and go on to lead full, productive lives.

The state-of-the-art burn facilities are staffed and equipped to provide reconstructive and restorative surgery for healed burns, as well as treatments for other various skin conditions. With 22 locations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, the Shriners network of hospitals provides advanced care for children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate, regardless of the families' ability to pay. Learn more at shrinershospitalsforchildren.org.

cooking to help extinguish a fire.

Use electric appliances on a countertop, safely away from the sink or other water sources, but remember to avoid using an extension

TURN UP THE HEAT SAFELY

During cooler weather, many households increase reliance on natural gas for heat. Entertaining during the holiday months can also raise natural gas usage. Natural gas, however, can be dangerous and even deadly. Help minimize the risk of a natural gas leak with these tips:

- Leave the house immediately if you think you smell natural gas; call your gas company or 911 for assistance once you are safely away.
- Teach every member of the house how to recognize the slightly sweet, sickly smell of natural gas. Some compare it to the smell of rotting eggs or food.
- Schedule annual service by a qualified professional for all appliances, gas lines and other gas-consuming elements of your home.

cord to supply power to kitchen appliances.

For more information, activity books for kids, tip cards and additional tools for families, visit beburnaware.org.



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Should doctors turn away unvaccinated children to protect other patients?

By KATE THAYER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

It took a family bout of rotavirus, a measles outbreak tied to Disneyland and stricter school enrollment rules to get Kristen O'Meara to take a harder look at and eventually switch her once-defiant stance against vaccinations for her children.

But the 40-year-old Palos Park, Illinois, mom said if a doctor had taken the time to educate rather than scold her, she might have changed her mind sooner. And her family, including three young daughters, might have avoided being sick for days with the nasty intestinal bug.

Childhood immunizations remain a deeply divisive issue. And though studies purporting to link vaccines to autism have been widely discredited, pockets of parental resistance persist: According to surveys by Elk Grove Village, Illinois-based American Academy of Pediatrics of its member physicians, more doctors in 2013 than in 2006 reported encountering vaccine-hesitant families.

In a report released in September, the academy also revealed that as parents decline to have their children vaccinated, more pediatricians are turning such families away in the name of safeguarding the health of other patients.

The academy, in newly released guidelines for pediatricians, said excluding families who refuse to vaccinate their children can be "an acceptable option" if used as a last resort in areas where doctors are not scarce, and only after several attempts to educate and quell concerns. The report details reasons why some parents are skeptical of vaccines and suggests ways to

address them.

Some local pediatricians had already made it their policy not to accept new patients who are not vaccinated; other doctors have severed ties with existing patients.

But other health-care professionals say keeping unvaccinated patients and their parents under their wing is better for public health, offering the best shot at swaying their views.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, along with the pediatrics academy, recommend a schedule of vaccinations for children unless a medical reason, like cancer treatment that suppresses the immune system, dictates otherwise. The new AAP report stresses the need for further education for parents even before their children are born.

"We have to talk to our patients, our parents and make sure they understand," said Dr. Kathryn Edwards, a Vanderbilt University pediatrics professor who co-wrote one of the AAP reports. "You need to listen to what they're asking, answer their questions and give them (websites) that will help."

"The decision to dismiss a family who continues to refuse immunization is not one that should be made lightly, nor should it be made without considering and respecting the reasons for the parents' point of view," the report states. "Nevertheless, the individual pediatrician may consider dismissal of families who refuse vaccination as an acceptable option."

Edwards said research points to a few main reasons why parents question vaccines: They wrongly believe that the diseases the shots protect against aren't



Tribune News Service

Kristen O'Meara, 40, with her daughters Natasha, 6, center, and twins Aine and Lena, 4, right, at their home in Illinois. O'Meara once refused to vaccinate her three young children. After several factors, including a nasty bout of rotavirus, O'Meara changed her mind and now her daughters are fully vaccinated.

serious, they question the safety of vaccines or they think any requirement to vaccinate is an infringement on personal rights.

That skepticism was behind O'Meara's hesitancy.

As a first-time mom six years ago, she worried about the potential side effects of vaccines.

But instead of discussing and trying to allay her concerns, one pediatrician simply "shamed" her, O'Meara said.

"He didn't bring me into the fold. He really wanted to point his finger at me," said O'Meara, a Chicago

expect to be treated that way."

The encounter, O'Meara said, left her angry and only heightened her mistrust of the mainstream health-care industry. She soon found a nontraditional doctor who supported her decision against vaccines.

It was the measles outbreak that spread through Disneyland visitors starting in 2014 that initially gave O'Meara and her husband second thoughts, leading her to start researching scientific papers on the topic.

Then, in March 2015, the entire family got sick with rotavirus, including O'Meara's mother, who regularly cared for the children.

"When I realized it was rotavirus, I thought, 'Huh, there's a vaccine for that,'" O'Meara said. "It was eye-opening. (I thought), 'We're not as protected as I thought we were. Maybe I need to do more research. Maybe we just suffered through something that we didn't have to.'"

Around the same time, the preschool O'Meara's oldest daughter attended stopped accepting unvaccinated children. And O'Meara learned that Illinois had made it more difficult for parents to receive waivers from school vaccination requirements based on religious objections.

"I thought to myself, 'I might as well take them in and vaccinate them, because they're cracking down, anyway,'" O'Meara said.

A month later, O'Meara found a new pediatrician, and inquired about a catch-up schedule of vaccines for all three children. Since earlier this year, they've been fully vaccinated and have had no bad reactions, O'Meara said. Now she wishes she'd had more guidance from physicians who could have pointed her to the science earlier.

"It was just a whole bunch of things that happened during that time," she said. "It wasn't only that we had gotten sick. It was the catalyst."

Dr. Don Seidman, an Elmhurst pediatrician and chair of pediatrics for DuPage Medical Group, said its doctors will continue to treat unvaccinated patients while trying to persuade their parents to have them immunized.

Seidman said in his experience, and according to one AAP study, about half the parents who are hesitant about vaccines change their minds after discussions with a doctor. And sometimes the prospect of losing their pediatrician will be enough to change parents' minds.

"It's worth it to make the effort," Seidman said.

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