



Mott Poll Report

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Disruption of Parent-Provider Discussions about Vaccines

Parents typically rely on their child's primary care provider to guide them in decisions about their child's health. In light of recent reports suggesting increased parent concerns about vaccines, the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of children 6-18 about discussions with healthcare providers related to vaccines.

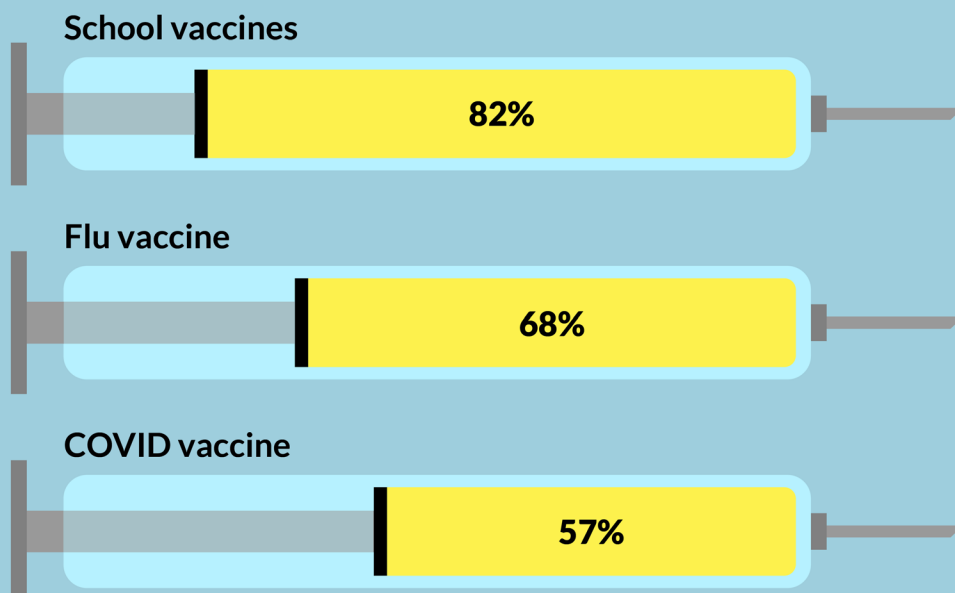
Most parents say they have talked about vaccines with their child's regular doctor in the past two years, most often discussing vaccines needed for school (82%) and less often flu vaccine (68%) or COVID vaccine (57%). Fifteen percent of parents say they did not discuss any vaccines with their child's regular doctor. Some parents report talking only with other health professionals, such as pharmacists or nurses, about school vaccines (4%), flu vaccine (8%) or COVID vaccine (14%). Three percent of parents say they delayed or skipped a healthcare visit for their child to avoid talking about vaccines.

Parents who say they talked with their child's regular doctor about flu and/or COVID vaccines report positive experiences: most describe the provider as being open to their questions and concerns (81% flu, 82% for COVID) and offering information that was helpful in making their decision (71% flu, 72% for COVID). More parents say the doctor explained what is known and not known about COVID vaccine (65%) compared to flu vaccine (55%).

In describing their decisions over the past two years, 89% of parents report their child received vaccines required for school while fewer say their child received flu vaccine (57%) or COVID vaccine (57%). Parents who recall talking about vaccines with their child's regular provider are more likely to say their child received vaccines. One-quarter of parents (27%) report difficulty getting vaccines for their child in the past two years, such as having to go to another location for vaccines or problems scheduling appointments. Parents who say they did not discuss vaccines with their child's regular doctor are more likely to report of difficulty getting vaccines for their child.

Six percent of parents report that their child does not get any vaccines. Among these parents, 43% report no vaccine discussions with any healthcare provider in the past two years.

Parent discussion with child's doctor about vaccines for child in the past two years



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2022

Report Highlights

1 in 7 parents have not talked about vaccines with their child's regular provider in the past two years.

Among parents who discussed vaccines with their child's regular doctor, 4 in 5 say the doctor was open to their questions and concerns.

1 in 4 parents describe problems getting vaccines for their child in the past two years.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in August-September 2022 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 0-18 years living in their household (n=2,023). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 61% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 1,483 parents with at least one child age 6-18. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±1 to 3 percentage points and higher among subgroups.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

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C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH
Contributing Editor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS
Publication Designer: Sara L. Schultz, MPS



**SUSAN B. MEISTER
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION
AND RESEARCH CENTER**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

Implications

Most children have a “regular” doctor – a primary care provider or clinic where they receive check-ups and other preventive care. Primary care providers help parents understand their child's growth and development, talk with parents about their questions and concerns, and offer guidance on how parents can support their child's health and safety. Vaccines are a frequent topic of discussion, as parents often have questions about the vaccine timing, benefits, risks and side effects. Importantly, vaccine discussions are not a one-time thing: recommendations can change, new vaccines are introduced, and new information can be discovered about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines.

Typically, primary care providers play a key role in providing information and helping parents make decisions about vaccines for their child. However, these findings suggest a change in the role of the primary care provider as the “go-to information source” for vaccines; 1 in 7 parents in this Mott Poll did not talk about any vaccines with their child's regular doctor in the past two years. Of note is the lower rate of parent-provider discussion of COVID vaccine compared to school vaccines, despite COVID vaccine being new. In most cases, parents have more questions and concerns about a new vaccine, and usually turn to the child's regular provider for explanations.

Some parents may feel that their child's regular doctor will be insulted or irritated if they ask questions or express concerns about vaccinating their child. However, findings from this Mott Poll show that 4 in 5 parents who talked about flu or COVID vaccines felt that the provider was open to this discussion. Some parents may feel that their child's regular doctor does not have the knowledge or expertise needed to give the type of explanation that parents find useful. However, these findings show that over 70% of parents who talked about flu or COVID vaccines felt that the provider offered information that was helpful to their decision making.

It is not a coincidence that parents reported similar rates of discussion with their child's regular doctor for flu vaccine and COVID vaccine, as they share the common feature of not being consistently available in child health practices. Even when parents bring the child for an in-person visit, they may be told that they need to go elsewhere to have their child get flu and COVID vaccines. In contrast, vaccines required for school or daycare are typically stocked and ready for administration as part of the child's visit.

During COVID, many primary care practices limited in-person visits and increased the number of visits done by telehealth. These changes may have disrupted the usual flow of the visit, particularly for check-ups. Providers may have felt rushed and unable to cover all recommended topics, including vaccines; parents may have felt hesitant to prolong the visit with additional questions. Additionally, providers may be less inclined to discuss vaccines that are not offered at their practice site, such as flu and COVID vaccine. In the absence of information and guidance from health professionals, parents may turn to other sources that may be less accurate.

One in four parents in this Mott Poll reported having difficulty getting vaccines for their child in the past two years. It is not surprising that parents perceive additional burdens on their time as difficulties. This includes having to find another location and having to make another appointment for their child's vaccines. To improve the vaccination process for children and parents, having all vaccines onsite is an important first step, along with having providers with the time and expertise to talk with parents about the specific risks and benefits of each vaccine.

Finally, these findings are concerning for the subset of parents who choose to not allow any vaccines for their child, as nearly half are not having any discussions about vaccines with healthcare providers. Lack of discussion prevents these parents from learning about and considering new information that might prompt them to reevaluate the reasons for their decision to not vaccinate their child.