

# Parents trust doctors most when it comes to information about vaccine safety

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Most parents get their information about vaccines from their children's doctors, but some also consider public health officials, other parents, friends and family members and even celebrities as sources of vaccine information.

These are the results of a national survey conducted by University of Michigan researchers to determine how much parents trust different sources of information in regards to vaccines, as well as to determine what disseminating methods would be most effective for those distributing evidence-based information about vaccines.

The results of this study appear online today in the journal *Pediatrics*.

"We know from this national study that parents get information about children's vaccines from many sources," says Gary L. Freed, M.D., M.P.H., chief of the Division of General Pediatrics and director of the Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit. "But the source trusted most by parents for vaccine-safety information is their children's doctor, which is consistent with the results of several previous studies."

Researchers surveyed 1,552 parents of children ages 17 years and younger on topics including parental trust of sources of information about vaccines. Researchers asked parents to rate degree of trust in sources as 'a lot,' 'some' or 'none.'

A great majority of parents reported trusting their child's doctor 'a lot'

(76%). Other sources trusted 'a lot' by parents were other [health care providers](#) (26%) and government vaccine experts/officials (23%).

Many other sources for vaccine-safety information were frequently reported to be trusted 'some,' including family and friends (67%) and parents who believe their child was harmed by a vaccine (65%). Celebrities were trusted 'a lot' for vaccine-safety information by 2% of the respondents and 'some' by 24%.

The study also found that mothers were more likely than fathers to report 'some' or 'a lot' of trust in vaccine safety information provided by parents who claimed their child was injured by vaccines, celebrities, television shows, and magazines/news articles. Trust also varied by race/ethnicity: white and Hispanic parents were more likely than black parents to trust family and friends 'a lot' or 'some,' and Hispanic parents were more likely than white or black parents to trust celebrities 'a lot' or 'some' for vaccine-safety information.

In fact, 40% of the Hispanic parents place a lot or some trust in celebrities. It is unclear from this study whether such celebrities are in the Spanish-language entertainment milieu or in the mainstream English-language medium.

"Those who design public health efforts to provide evidence-based information must recognize that different strategies may be required to reach all groups of parents," says Freed.

"Even if only a fraction of parents receive, believe, and act on misinformation about vaccine safety provided by these different sources, individual children's health and the population's health may suffer because of [vaccine](#) preventable illnesses," Freed says.

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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