

Pandemic didn't lower parents' trust in childhood vaccines

October 23 2023, by Denise Mann



Lots of vaccine disinformation spread during the pandemic, and doctors worried that may have given some parents pause about not only the risks of the COVID shot, but of childhood vaccines as well.

Now, new research puts that worry to rest.

"We did not see a significant increase in [parents](#) who are hesitant toward routine [childhood vaccines](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to before," said study author [Dr. David Higgins](#), a research fellow at Children's Hospital Colorado in Aurora.

For the study, his team analyzed [survey data](#) from more than 3,500 parents in Colorado from April 2018 through August 2020 on many health topics, including their attitudes about vaccines.

Overall, 20% of parents were "[vaccine](#)-hesitant" toward childhood vaccines, but these feelings didn't change from the pre-pandemic to post-pandemic periods. "The bottom line is that most parents do not hesitate to vaccinate their children to protect them from life-threatening diseases," Higgins said.

Parents who are unsure about vaccines should bring their questions and concerns to their pediatrician or [health care provider](#).

There were differences in attitudes toward childhood vaccines by race, preferred language, insurance status and education level. Black and Asian parents were more likely to be hesitant, compared to white parents.

The study was published online Oct. 23 in the journal [Pediatrics](#).

[Noel Brewer](#) is a professor of health behavior at the University of North Carolina's Gillings School of Global Public Health, in Chapel Hill. He co-wrote an editorial accompanying the new study.

"High rates of childhood vaccine uptake have meant that most American parents don't know firsthand about polio, measles or whooping cough," Brewer said. "Under-vaccination can quickly allow diseases to break through, putting kids in the hospital and ending their lives."

Vaccine-hesitant parents who under-vaccinate their children also tend to live in the same area, which makes disease outbreaks even more likely, he pointed out.

It's key to have an open conversation with your child's doctors about vaccines. "Doctors and other clinical staff play a big role in ensuring high vaccine confidence," Brewer said.

[Dr. Andrew Pavia](#), chief of the division of pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, agreed.

"We need our trusted sources, pediatricians [and] [family physicians](#), to be able to spend more time counseling families. Unfortunately, they are short on time and resources to do this," he noted.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [the childhood vaccine schedule](#).

David M. Higgins et al, The COVID-19 Pandemic and Parental Attitudes Toward Routine Childhood Vaccines, *Pediatrics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2023-062927](#)

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