Routine childhood immunization is one of the crowning achievements in public health over the past century. A 2013 *New England Journal of Medicine* study estimated that childhood vaccination programs have prevented 103.1 million cases of diphtheria, hepatitis A, measles, mumps, pertussis, polio and rubella since 1924. A 2005 *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* study estimated that for every dollar spent in the US, vaccination programs saved more than $5 in direct costs and approximately $11 in additional costs to society.

However, challenges remain. Outbreaks of measles, pertussis, Hib, and other vaccine preventable diseases are returning. Numerous factors—including the cost of acquiring and administering vaccines, an increasingly complex delivery system, as well as a small but growing number of parents who are forgoing vaccination for their children—put success in jeopardy.

**Talking points**

- The Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has long supported preventive care, including immunizations, in the medical home setting as a major component of pediatric health care and disease prevention and believes legislative barriers should not restrict access to immunizations or other forms of preventive care for children.
- Pediatricians have long prescribed and administered childhood immunizations as standard of care per national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendations for diphtheria, hepatitis A, measles, mumps, pertussis, polio, rubella, Meningococcal disease, Tetanus, and HPV.
- Pediatricians overwhelmingly agree that vaccines are safe. They are rigorously tested prior to their approval and are thoroughly monitored in the millions of children who safely receive them each year.
- Parents have a right to refuse immunizations and pediatricians have an ethical and professional responsibility to keep every patient in their practice safe. Many pediatricians have instituted a stepwise approach to counseling families on the importance of recommended immunizations, which may include, as a last resort, dismissal of patients who are not compliant with the pediatrician’s recommendation. Their decisions are based on keeping every patient healthy and safe, including other vulnerable children who are exposed to one another in the practice (i.e. waiting area, etc.).
- Parents will do anything to keep their children healthy and safe, and pediatricians will likewise do all we can to keep all the children who are our patients healthy and safe. Pediatricians work constantly to create a partnership with parents because we share the common goal of protecting children from sickness and disease. There are those rare circumstances when we are no longer able to find common ground on the importance of standard immunizations.
- The passport law, as it is currently written, applies to all vaccines, thus prohibiting a pediatrician from this standard practice which protects their vulnerable patient population from vaccine-preventable diseases that may be carried by an unvaccinated person into the office.
- The established "recommended child and adolescent immunization schedule" is at the heart of the health and well-being of all children. No law should be considered or passed that would take steps back from the long-established success of the historic immunization schedule.
AAP Position

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has long supported preventive care, including immunizations, in the medical home setting as a major component of pediatric health care and disease prevention and believes economic barriers should not restrict access to immunizations or other forms of preventive care for children. The AAP works to educate the public and key decision makers about the importance of routine child immunization and actively counters misinformation about vaccine safety and efficacy.

Facts from the AAP

- 70.4% of children between the ages of 19 and 35 months were immunized according to ACIP/AAP/AAFP/ACOG recommendations in 2017.
- 15,808 cases of whooping cough (pertussis) were reported in the US in 2017. A multistate outbreak of measles linked to an amusement park in California led to 188 cases in 24 states from January 1 to August 21, 2015. Most measles patients were unvaccinated against the disease.
- 2% of children entering kindergarten across the country in the 2017-2018 school year had nonmedical exemptions from immunization requirements. Of states and localities reporting, Oregon has the highest rate at 7.5%, and California, the lowest at 0.1%.
- More than 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born between 1994 and 2013 have been prevented by vaccines.