



News Release

STATEMENT BY AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS PRESIDENT RENÉE R. JENKINS, MD, FAAP, ON THE JUNE 4 VACCINE RALLY IN DC

“As pediatricians who treat children with autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASD) every day, we understand the struggles and frustrations associated with the disorder experienced by the children and their families who live with it daily.

“We have the same question that many of the parents who rallied today in Washington are asking: What causes autism? The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is among those actively trying to find answers to that question. As physicians, scientists and parents, we continue to support studies and publish research designed to determine the cause or causes of autism. We continue to improve pediatricians’ ability to diagnose and treat children with ASD as early as possible and to provide parents with the information, resources and support they need.

“In the meantime, it’s critical to continue to do all we can to protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases. It would be a real tragedy if parents relied on incorrect or incomplete information about the safety of vaccines to guide their decisions when it comes to getting their children immunized.

“Immunizations are the biggest medical success story of the 20th century. Thanks to vaccines, American children no longer contract polio, facing a future immobilized inside an iron lung. Small pox no longer exists. We’ve reduced the incidence of rubella (German measles) and its threat of birth defects. The pain, injuries and deaths from such diseases as measles, whooping cough and bacterial meningitis have dramatically decreased.

“But success cannot lead to complacency. It is clear the benefits of vaccines far outweigh the risks. As pediatricians our job is to take the best medical care possible of all children, and that includes continuing to do all we can to make vaccines as safe as possible. Vaccines go through extensive and rigorous scrutiny before approval. After licensure, studies are performed to look for possible rare adverse events, and a system is in place for health care providers and parents to report any problem that occurs in a child after vaccination. The vaccine schedule is constantly reviewed for safety and effectiveness, and it is adjusted whenever scientific studies show there is a need.

“Success also does not mean immunizations are any less critical today. As the current measles outbreaks in the United States make clear, the threats from vaccine preventable diseases come to us from all over the world and are far from over. It is vital to the health of our nation’s children, as well as other vulnerable people, to ensure they are protected from all vaccine-preventable diseases. The AAP and your child’s pediatrician base vaccine recommendations on the best, most up-to-date information available.

“Many parents have never seen the devastating diseases that vaccines prevent. It is our goal as pediatricians to make sure they never do.”

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information about vaccines, autism and other child health topics, go to www.aap.org.