

13 Questions to Ask Your Child's Pediatrician About Vaccines



Before your child's next vaccination, **you deserve full transparency from your pediatrician.** Use these questions to guide that conversation and protect your right to informed consent.

1 Which vaccines does my state actually say are needed for school attendance?

State vaccine requirements for school attendance vary widely and are often broader than what's strictly needed to protect public health. Knowing your state's actual mandates, and what exemptions exist, helps you separate legal requirements from recommendations, and avoid vaccinating solely out of assumption or pressure.

Notes

2 How many vaccines will my child receive by the age of 18 if we follow the CDC schedule and would you consider a delayed schedule?

The CDC schedule has expanded significantly over the past few decades, and many parents aren't aware of the full cumulative total until they see it laid out. Asking about a delayed or alternative schedule opens the door to a real conversation about spacing, timing, and whether your pediatrician is open to individualizing the approach for your child. You have the right to find a pediatrician who shares your values and concerns.

Notes

3 Are vaccines 100% effective?

The CDC and WHO both report that no vaccine offers complete, lifelong protection — effectiveness varies by vaccine, can wane over time, and differs person to person. Understanding these limits helps parents set realistic expectations and know what symptoms to still watch for, even in a fully vaccinated child. Any pediatrician who answers yes should give cause for concern.

Notes

4 In medical school, did you study each vaccine and its possible side effects? How do you keep up to date with this information when new vaccines are introduced or updated?

A 2023 survey found that up to 79% of medical students felt their formal training on vaccines and vaccine hesitancy counseling was insufficient. Asking how your pediatrician fills that gap, through continuing education, journals, or other sources, can tell you a lot about how current and well-rounded their knowledge really is.

Notes

5 Do you read the package insert for each vaccine and make sure you look for updated inserts regularly?

Package inserts contain the manufacturer's own data on ingredients, clinical trial results, contraindications, and reported side effects — information that isn't always covered in standard visits. Asking whether your pediatrician reviews these regularly (including updates) can reveal how closely they track the fine print behind each vaccine they administer.

Notes

6 Do you find any of these vaccine ingredients problematic for young children?

- Aluminum, a developmental toxin
- Animal tissues: pig blood, horse blood, rabbit brain, dog kidney, monkey kidney, chick embryo, chicken egg, duck egg
- Formaldehyde, may be linked to leukemia, according to researchers
- Human diploid cells, derived from human aborted fetal tissue
- Mercury/thimerosal, a developmental toxin, may be linked to autism
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG), may injure brain neurons

Vaccine ingredient lists are rarely discussed at well-child visits, but many parents want to understand what's actually being injected and why. Asking your pediatrician directly can reveal whether they're familiar with these components, can speak to the research behind them, and are willing to discuss any concerns you have about your child's individual sensitivities.

Notes

7 Do you know what VAERS is?

VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) is the national system where healthcare providers and parents can report suspected vaccine side effects. Because it's the first line of defense for catching safety signals, it's worth knowing whether your child's pediatrician recognizes signs of an adverse reaction and is prepared to file a report — rather than dismissing symptoms as unrelated.

Notes

8 Do you believe that adverse reactions happen, know what to look for, and report any adverse reactions to VAERS?

Reported adverse reactions range from mild and common — like fever, fussiness, or soreness at the injection site — to more serious events such as high fever, seizures, persistent crying, allergic reactions, or loss of consciousness. Knowing what's considered a reportable reaction helps parents recognize warning signs early and ensures any concerning symptoms get documented rather than overlooked.

Notes

9 Do you have an understanding of the illness for which you are giving an immunization, and what is the risk today of my child acquiring this illness?

Many vaccines were developed for diseases that are now rare in the U.S., so actual risk of exposure can vary a lot depending on your community and circumstances. Understanding your pediatrician's grasp of both the illness and its current real-world risk helps you weigh the vaccine's benefit against your child's specific likelihood of exposure.

Notes

10 Did you know vaccine manufacturers are free from liability when children are injured or die following vaccination?

Under the 1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act, vaccine manufacturers are shielded from most lawsuits over injuries caused by their products — claims instead go through a separate federal compensation program. Knowing this in advance helps parents understand what recourse (or lack of it) exists if their child is harmed, before agreeing to vaccinate.

Notes

11 Prior to injection, do you look into whether or not there is a family history of auto-immune issues or do testing for the MTHFR genetic polymorphism, which may increase the chances of vaccine injury?

Some research suggests that family history of autoimmune conditions or certain genetic factors, like the MTHFR polymorphism, may make a child more susceptible to vaccine injury. Asking whether your pediatrician screens for these risk factors first can help you make a more personalized decision rather than a one-size-fits-all one.

Notes

12 Are you knowledgeable about the clinical trials for the vaccines you administer and do you know if they have been tested against an inert placebo control?

Many vaccine trials are tested against another active vaccine or an adjuvant-containing solution rather than a true inert (saline) placebo, which can make it harder to isolate the vaccine's actual side effect profile. Asking your pediatrician about the trial design behind each vaccine reveals how much they understand the strength of the safety data they're relying on.

Notes

13 Does your practice receive any financial incentive for having patients follow the CDC vaccination schedule (or the state requirements) and will you allow my child to remain in this practice if we decide not to follow it?

Some insurers and pharmaceutical programs offer pediatric practices bonuses tied to vaccination compliance rates, which can create a financial incentive that isn't always disclosed to parents. Asking directly, and confirming your child won't be dismissed from the practice for a different vaccination choice, helps you gauge whether the advice you're getting is purely medical or shaped by other pressures.

Notes



Tip: Bring this list to your appointment and write down the answers in real time — if your pediatrician is dismissive of your questions or rushes through them, that itself is worth noting as you decide whether this practice is the right fit for your family.

5 Questions to Ask About School Lunches



School meals shape children's daily nutrition, yet hidden ingredients and **ultra-processed foods can put their health at risk.**

Use these five questions to get clarity, demand transparency, and protect your child's well-being.

1

Where can I find a list of ingredients in the food served here?

Ask for ingredient lists and nutrition labels for all cafeteria meals. Investigations have found pesticides, heavy metals, and veterinary drugs in school lunches — including lead (100% of samples tested), arsenic, cadmium, and glyphosate. Parents have a right to know what their children are being served.

Notes:

2

How are foods sourced and prepared?

Are meals made from fresh, minimally processed ingredients, or from ultra-processed foods (like nuggets, pizza, instant soups, packaged desserts)? Studies link ultra-processed foods to obesity, ADHD, diabetes, and even brain changes affecting eating behavior. Ask if your district prioritizes local, organic, or whole-food vendors.

Notes:

3

How are food safety and nutrition standards enforced?

USDA "meal pattern" rules set minimums — but they don't prevent unsafe additives. Who monitors pesticide levels, heavy metals, and banned chemicals in school meals? Does the school use independent lab testing, or rely solely on USDA claims of being "nutritious"?

Notes:

4

Can I review the school's menus and policies?

Request monthly menus, vendor contracts, and wellness policy documents. Parents should know how decisions are made about which foods are offered and what standards are followed. Transparency builds trust — lack of transparency should raise red flags.

Notes:

5

What healthy alternatives can I provide or advocate for?

Ask if you can send your own snacks for parties or keep approved backup snacks in the classroom. Join the wellness committee, PTA, or school board meetings to push for better vendors, ingredient transparency, and more whole-food options. Your involvement can directly improve what's served to all children.

Notes:



Tip: Always keep a copy of menus and policies, ask to see ingredient lists, and send healthy backup snacks. If you're not satisfied, consider a DIY lunch approach — and work with other parents to demand safer, more nutritious options.

5 Questions to Ask Your School About Safe Tech

Schools rely heavily on wireless technology, but **few parents know how much exposure their children face each day**. These five questions will help you uncover what's really happening in your child's classroom and ensure safer, healthier learning environments.

1

What kind of wireless infrastructure is currently in use on campus?

Ask about the number and placement of Wi-Fi routers and wireless access points (WAPs) in classrooms, whether 5G small cells or antennas have been installed nearby, and if there are any cell towers on or adjacent to school property.

Why it matters: Proximity and density of wireless infrastructure can significantly increase exposure levels, especially for young children.

Notes:

2

How much time each day are students using wireless devices, and are they instructed on how to use them safely?

Find out how long students use tablets, Chromebooks, or laptops during the school day, and whether they're advised to keep devices away from their bodies or use airplane mode when possible.

Why it matters: Longer usage increases cumulative exposure. Many children rest devices on their laps and against their bodies without knowing the risks.

Notes:

3

Are there wired (Ethernet) options available for internet access in classrooms?

Ask if the school has Ethernet ports or wired connections available for devices and whether these can be used in place of Wi-Fi.

Why it matters: Wired internet is faster, more secure, and does not expose students and staff to unnecessary wireless radiation.

Notes:

4

What policies are in place to limit wireless radiation exposure for students and staff?

Ask if the school turns off routers when not in use, restricts unnecessary screen time, or has guidelines based on age or developmental stage.

Why it matters: Simple policy changes can drastically reduce exposure without compromising on high-quality technology-based education.

Notes:

5

Has the school reviewed current scientific research and public health recommendations on wireless radiation and children?

Schools rely heavily on wireless technology, but few parents know how much exposure their children face each day. These five questions will help you uncover what's really happening in your child's classroom and ensure safer, healthier learning environments.

Notes:



Tip: Ask for these details in writing so you have a clear record of the school's current setup — and follow up in a few months to see whether any changes



8 Questions to Ask About School-Based Health Centers



Before signing any paperwork for a School-Based Health Center (SBHC), or any other healthcare on the school premises, parents deserve full transparency. Use these questions to guide conversations with your school and to protect your right to informed consent.

1

Is there a School-Based Health Center at our school and who operates it?

Many parents are surprised to learn that often the SBHC is not operated by the school but is operated by a separate entity contracting with the school or district. Ask questions about the financial arrangements and contracts – who is benefiting from allowing the SBHC to operate on school property. Is the school liable for harms that occur at the SBHC?

Notes:

2

How is the SBHC different from the school nurse?

Is there a school nurse (employed by the school) available and can I consent to only having my child treated by the nurse with my knowledge and consent?

Notes:

3

What exactly am I consenting to with the SBHC?

Many SBHCs use broad “blanket consent” forms at the start of the school year. These forms may allow providers to administer vaccines, prescribe medications, offer reproductive or mental health counseling, dental care, and conduct screenings without further notice to you. Parents should request a copy of the form, cross out any services they do not agree to, and sign only for limited care (e.g., first aid only).

Notes:

4

Will I be notified every time my child receives care?

Parents should insist on notification—written or by phone—every time their child receives care beyond routine first aid. Some SBHCs provide treatments or counseling sessions without notifying parents. Ask your school and the clinic for a written policy guaranteeing that you will always be informed.

Notes:

5

Who are the SBHC providers, and what are their credentials?

SBHCs may employ physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health counselors, dentists, and social workers. Many are outside contractors, not school staff. Parents should request names, qualifications, and the organizations actually employing these providers (are they employees or independent contractors of the school? Of the SBHC?). Ask how these providers are compensated and if they are required to have professional liability insurance. Ask who oversees them and how complaints or concerns are handled. Ask who is liable if something goes wrong.

Notes:

6

Can my child be treated without my permission?

In some states with ‘minor consent’ laws, children, in some instances, as young as 11–12, may legally consent on their own to vaccines, mental health services, reproductive care, or even gender-related services. This means your child could be treated without your knowledge or approval. Ask your school what state laws apply and demand to be included in all decision-making.

Notes:

7

Who pays for SBHC treatment?

Ask about how costs for SBHC treatment are covered. Are they billing your insurance? Can you opt out of insurance coverage for this care? Is the school district paying? Is Medicaid paying for Medicaid eligible children? Some SBHCs may bill a parent’s insurance and still refuse access to information about the care received.

Notes:

8

How is my child’s health information stored and shared?

SBHCs operate under a mix of HIPAA and FERPA regulations, which can allow health data to be shared between schools, healthcare providers, and sometimes state agencies. Parents should ask how records are stored, who has access, and if they can view all notes and records. Insist on written guarantees that your child’s information will not be shared without your consent.

Notes:



Tip: Always request copies of everything you sign, and consider filing a Non-Consent Form to limit care to emergency first aid only unless you are present.



5 Questions to Ask Your School About Curriculum and Privacy



Before the school year begins, **parents deserve clear answers on curriculum, library content, and privacy protections.** Use these questions to guide conversations with your school and to protect your family's values and your right to informed consent.

1	If a class, activity, or assignment conflicts with our religious beliefs, what are our options to opt out? <i>Under the 2025 Supreme Court ruling <i>Mahmoud v. Taylor</i>, public schools must let parents opt their children out of instruction, activities, or assignments that conflict with religious beliefs. Since schools don't always proactively share this information, ask before the school year starts what curriculum and reading lists are planned.</i>	Notes
2	Does the school have a policy for objections that aren't religious in nature? <i>The Mahmoud ruling only guarantees opt-outs for religious objections, but some districts choose to go further and accommodate other personal or values-based concerns. Asking directly reveals whether your school offers this flexibility or limits opt-outs strictly to religious grounds.</i>	Notes
3	If we opt out, what alternative activity will my child do, who supervises it, and will their grade be affected? <i>An opt-out is only meaningful if it doesn't come at a cost — whether that's an unsupervised study hall or a lower grade. Confirming these details in advance protects your child from being penalized, academically or otherwise, for your decision.</i>	Notes
4	What are our rights to review or limit my child's access to library books or classroom materials I find objectionable? <i>Parental rights over library access vary by state — some require schools to post their catalog online, offer a formal review process for objections, or require opt-in permission for sensitive materials. Knowing what your state and district actually offer helps you take real steps to limit exposure to content you find objectionable.</i>	Notes
5	Does the school administer any surveys or evaluations covering topics like mental health, religion, political beliefs, or sexual behavior/attitudes — and how are parents notified in advance? <i>The federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) requires advance notice before schools survey students on sensitive topics like mental health, religion, political beliefs, or sexual behavior. Asking about this upfront ensures you're informed before, not after, your child participates in this kind of assessment.</i>	Notes



Tip: Ask your school in writing so you have a dated record of what curriculum, materials, or surveys you've opted out of — and follow up promptly if you don't receive a response.

