



## **Primary care pediatricians across Europe are concerned over recent US childhood vaccination guidance: an ECPCP statement.**

Public health decisions, particularly those affecting children, should be guided by the best available scientific evidence, with the primary aim of ensuring safety, effectiveness, and equity in health protection.

In the matter of immunization and vaccination policies, the leading position has always been universal childhood vaccination. This approach, supported by decades of epidemiological evidence and real-world experience, has proven essential for achieving high coverage rates, preventing outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, reducing health inequalities and thus becoming the cornerstone of disease prevention.

The recent immunization schedule update by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention reduces the recommendations for some of the vaccines, shifting toward selective use or case-by-case shared clinical decision-making. This new guidance, issued in a context of increasing politicization of science, is being published at a time we are already witnessing the return of some deadly vaccine-preventable diseases.

Universal vaccination remains the most effective and equitable way of protecting children from preventable illness and death. Vaccines with a strong and well-documented safety and effectiveness profile deliver their greatest public health benefit when recommended for all rather than to restricted, selected risk groups. Universal recommendations provide clarity for professionals, consistency for families, and resilience for health systems.

Comparisons between national immunization schedules can be informative only if they adequately reflect differences in epidemiology, population structure, health-care organization, and access to preventive services. European experience shows that selective strategies are harder to implement, more sensitive to disparities, and more likely to leave gaps in protection, particularly among socially and economically vulnerable children. Furthermore, changes in immunization policy driven by non-scientific direction erode trust among health professionals and families, a trust that is fundamental to the success of vaccination programs.

From the children rights perspective, vaccination is a core instrument of equity and solidarity, protecting the individual child while contributing to collective protection. Reducing universal recommendations risks increasing inequities in health outcomes and undermining the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health.

From the standpoint of European pediatric primary care, the recent revision of the US childhood immunization recommendations represents a potential step backward from a robust prevention model based on universal vaccination, strong scientific evidence, public confidence, and equity.

We express our full professional solidarity with pediatricians in the United States, who work daily to protect children's health in an increasingly complex context, and our closeness to American children and families, whose well-being depends on robust, evidence-based, and equitable preventive policies.

Safeguarding childhood immunization remains a shared global responsibility, grounded in science, ethics, and the fundamental rights of every child.

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