On May 8, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published new [data](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e2.htm?s_cid=mm6919e2_w) that documents what pediatricians around the nation have been reporting for weeks: many, many children have missed receiving important immunizations to protect them against diseases like measles, meningitis, and whooping cough.

As a pediatric health care provider, this is incredibly worrisome. We do not want to return to a time when parents had to worry that their infant could die of meningitis or measles – especially when we have vaccines to prevent these potentially devastating diseases. With no coronavirus vaccine available, the COVID-19 pandemic is giving all of us real-time insight into what this vulnerability feels like. Fortunately, we have vaccines to protect children and teens against 16 different diseases.

Immunizing infants, children, and adolescents is important and should not be delayed. I’m concerned that children who have missed vaccines have also missed other critical health care that occurs during pediatric visits, including physical exams, developmental and mental health screenings, and other important care.

I've heard first-hand that parents are worried about bringing their child to get well care. But I want to reassure families that, as providers of pediatric care, our number one priority is our patients' safety. Nationwide, we've innovated ways to make office visits even safer, including setting different hours or locations for well and sick children, rigorous sanitation and cleaning practices, and conducting portions of visits by telehealth. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges all parents to contact their child's health care provider to schedule a visit to catch up on vaccines or for a well-child check-up. AAP is continuously providing resources and recommendations to guide pediatricians in managing visits safely and effectively.

As social distancing restrictions begin to lift around the country and people begin to circulate, children and teens who are not vaccinated will be at higher risk for contracting a disease that could be prevented by a vaccine. While we wait for scientists and doctors to develop a vaccine for coronavirus, let’s work together to protect our children in every way that we can, today.