

AAP recommends positive discipline rather than physical, verbal punishment

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Editor's note: *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

The Academy released a revised policy statement today that reiterates its opposition to corporal punishment, citing new evidence linking this form of discipline to an increased risk of negative behavioral, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional outcomes for children. The policy also addresses the harm associated with verbal punishment, such as shaming and humiliation.

Titled *Effective Discipline to Raise Healthy Children*, the policy is available at <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3112> and will be published in the December issue of *Pediatrics*.

The AAP recommends that parents do not spank, hit, slap, threaten, insult, humiliate or shame to discipline their children. Research has shown that striking children, yelling at them or shaming can elevate stress hormones and lead to changes in the brain's architecture. Harsh verbal abuse also is linked to mental health problems in preteens and adolescents.

Instead, adults should reinforce appropriate behaviors, set limits, redirect children and set expectations.

The policy, from the Council on Child Abuse and Neglect and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, recommends that pediatricians educate parents on the potential harmful effects of corporal punishment and its ineffectiveness. Health care professionals can explain that although many children who were spanked become happy, healthy adults, evidence suggests that spanking may result in long-term harm.

Pediatricians can offer parents guidance on effective discipline strategies such as positive reinforcement and direct them to sources of positive parenting tips, including the AAP healthychildren.org website.

Pediatricians also can refer families who need more intensive help to community resources, including parenting groups, classes and mental health services.

A session titled "Creating Safe Places: A Look at Corporal Punishment and No Hit Zones (F3099)" will be held from 3-3:45 p.m. today in room W304GH of the convention center. See article at <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/10/19/nce18altdiscipline101918>.

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