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## Keep trusting the experts: Medical professionals remain best guidance on vaccines

Connie Heflin  
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Confusion doesn't have to mean paralysis. That's what I've been telling myself as I read through the latest vaccine recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

Lately, national vaccination headlines have left families feeling uncertain. Who really needs a vaccine, and when? If you've felt overwhelmed by all the changes, you're not alone.

Last week, the committee updated its recommendation for COVID-19 vaccines. Instead of a clear "everyone is encouraged to get this vaccine," the guidance now suggests a process called "shared decision-making."

This is a fancy way of saying: Talk with your primary care provider and decide together.

This shift may feel like the rules keep changing, and in some ways, they are. But it's not because new data demands it. It's because the committee itself has changed.

The committee's approach no longer reflects the steady voice of experienced doctors interpreting scientific evidence. Instead, it leans into ambiguity, leaving families to navigate uncertainty without clear direction.

That doesn't mean vaccines are less safe, but it does mean the guidance is less confident which erodes trust in vaccines.

Each time the recommendations change, more doubt creeps in. People start to hesitate. Seniors second-guess. Parents start to swap opinions on social media instead of asking health professionals.

In an era when misinformation spreads rapidly, we can't afford to let confusion lead to inaction.

Here's what I know for sure: Vaccines save lives. They are one of the most powerful tools we have to prevent serious illness.

The flu vaccine reduces hospitalizations and deaths every single year. The measles vaccine prevents outbreaks of a disease so contagious that one sick person can infect 9 out of 10 unprotected people nearby. And COVID-19 vaccines continue to protect those most vulnerable in our community, even as the virus continues to evolve.

Yes, the recommendations can feel muddled. But here's the bottom line: if you're unsure, don't turn to social media for the answer.

Ask your doctor. Call your pharmacist. Go to The American Academy of Pediatrics' website. Or pick up the phone and call us at Super Shot. We'll walk through it together.

The stakes are too high to let confusion win. When we hesitate, diseases such as measles and whooping cough get a foothold. But when we vaccinate, we protect not only ourselves, but the babies too young for immunizations or the grandparents fighting chronic illness.

So here's my ask: Don't let changing headlines stop you. Don't let confusion turn into paralysis.

Do your own research. Make sure it comes from trusted sources such as your primary care provider or a relevant health organization. Ask questions. And if you're still not sure, come see us at Super Shot.

The CDC's advisory committee may have changed, but your ability to make informed choices hasn't. Vaccines still work.

Your questions still matter. And your decision to get a vaccine can still save lives.

**Connie Heflin** is executive director of Super Shot.