

Daily Pilot

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2020 // Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent // dailypilot.com

COMMENTARY | **DR. RAMIN BASCHSHI AND
DR. RESHMI BASU**



Courtesy of Areg Balayan

PEDIATRICIANS RECOMMEND that parents continue to bring their children to well-child visits and make sure they're up to date on critical vaccinations.

Pediatric check-ups are more important than ever

One of the most important things parents can do for their children — especially during the vital first few years when they are growing and developing so quickly — is taking them to a pediatrician regularly for well-child visits.

Now, with the added stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic and many parents managing both childcare and distance learning, pediatricians are noticing a drop in patient visits.

It's an alarming trend. Well-child visits are considered essential for good reason: They help address developmental issues or concerns early and ensure children are up to date on critical vaccinations.

When children miss their pediatrician visits and, thus, delay their scheduled vaccinations, the family risks impacting not only their own health but the health of our population as a whole.

The more children miss or delay their vaccinations, the more likely we are to have an outbreak of a preventable disease such as measles, pertussis or chickenpox — a crucial concern when the world is already fighting a deadly pandemic. And with cold and flu season upon us, families will need their annual flu

shot, which is available now.

Prior to the pandemic, doctor's offices were sanitized regularly between patient visits, and more so now with waiting rooms, common spaces and shared surfaces being cleaned frequently. To protect patients and put parents' minds more at ease, additional measures have been put into place, including screening patients prior to entering medical offices, limiting the number of accompanying family members and requiring patients and staff to wear masks. Many offices are also limiting the time spent in the waiting room, putting patients in rooms shortly after they check in.

At every well-child visit, doctors are also screening for height, weight and developmental concerns such as speech delays, motor skills and parents' general worries. One in six children under the age of 3 have a developmental delay, and even under normal circumstances, it's estimated that more than 80% of these children don't receive the vital early intervention services that can help them close the developmental gap. Children benefit from the earliest possible intervention and support, so the earlier a

developmental concern is identified and addressed, the better the possible outcomes will be for that child.

Since its establishment more than 20 years ago, First 5 Orange County has focused on ensuring that Orange County's children receive all the tools they need to thrive, including early intervention starting with timely developmental screens. First 5 Orange County works collaboratively with its partners, such as the Orange County chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Help Me Grow OC and the Regional Center of Orange County, to ensure that all children are on a path to good health and have the support they need to thrive in life.

That includes scheduling — and keeping — those all-important well-child visits.

DR. RAMIN BASCHSHI

serves as president and chief executive officer of UCP of Orange County and is the Chair of the First 5 Orange County Children and Families Commission. **DR. RESHMI BASU** is the secretary of the American Academy of Pediatrics — Orange County chapter and a pediatrician at Pediatric and Adult Medicine in Tustin.