

Spanking Is Ineffective and Harmful to Children, Pediatricians' Group Says

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Parents should not spank their children, the American Academy of Pediatrics said on Monday in its most strongly worded policy statement warning against the harmful effects of corporal punishment in the home.

The group, which represents about 67,000 doctors, also recommended that pediatricians advise parents against the use of spanking, which it defined as “noninjurious, openhanded hitting with the intention of modifying child behavior,” and said to avoid using nonphysical punishment that is humiliating, scary or threatening.

“One of the most important relationships we all have is the relationship between ourselves and our parents, and it makes sense to eliminate or limit fear and violence in that loving relationship,” said Dr. Robert D. Sege, a pediatrician at Tufts Medical Center and the Floating Hospital for Children in Boston, and one of the authors of the statement.

The academy’s new policy, which will be published in the December issue of the journal [Pediatrics](#), updates [20-year-old guidance on discipline](#) that recommended parents be “encouraged” not to spank. The organization’s latest statement stems from a body of research that was unavailable two decades ago.

“I think people see school discipline and parental discipline very differently,” said [Elizabeth T. Gershoff, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin](#) who has studied corporal punishment in public schools.