Today’s piece was prepared by Josh Frankland, MD based on a New York Times article

[Spanking Is Ineffective and Harmful to Children, Pediatricians’ Group Says](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/05/health/spanking-harmful-study-pediatricians.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fhealth&action=click&contentCollection=health&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=79&pgtype=sectionfront).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released an update to its previous recommendations that had “encouraged” parents not to spank. The AAP now recommends that parents should not spank, and to avoid using nonphysical punishment that is humiliating, scary, or threatening. This update is predicated on findings from multiple studies including a large 2016 meta-analysis identifying no benefit from spanking and producing harmful effects comparable to those seen in children who are physically abused, including aggression and defiance. Further, the journalist mentions a small 2009 study of 23 young adults exposed to repeated harsh corporeal punishment, found reduced gray matter in the pre-frontal cortex and lower IQ’s.

Public opinion on corporal punishment has also been changing with a recent online poll in 2013 finding that spanking is down from 80% in 1995 to 67%. Though a survey in 2015 found that 7/10 Americans feel, “a good hard spanking is sometimes necessary to discipline a child.” The article suggests that physicians must offer an alternative discipline approach including empathy and understanding a child’s developmental level.

I found this article to be a compelling and concise summary of the AAP’s new position on corporal punishment. It supported it claims with citations from respected journals, with easily accessible links, or direct quotes of pediatricians. This article also did a nice job of demonstrating the change in perspective that has occurred over time in both the medical community and society in general as regards spanking. Some weaknesses in this article include their only minimal emphasis on new recommendations on discipline, an underlying personal story to make it more compelling, and any delving into why the perspective on spanking has changed over time.

**RESOURCES ON DISCIPLINE:**

[Effective Discipline to Raise Healthy Children](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2018/11/01/peds.2018-3112) *AAP*

[Communication and Discipline](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/default.aspx) *HealthChildren.org*

[Essentials for Parenting](https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/overview.html) *Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!