

We strongly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illness and to save lives.

We strongly believe in the safety of our vaccines.

We strongly believe that all children and young adults should receive all of the recommended vaccines according to the schedule published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>).

We strongly believe, based upon all available literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities. We firmly believe that thimerosal, a preservative that has been in vaccines for decades and remains in some vaccines, does not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

These things being said, we recognize that there has always been and will likely always be controversy surrounding vaccination. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, persuaded by his brother, was opposed to smallpox vaccine until scientific data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his favorite son Franky who contracted smallpox and died at the age of 4, leaving Ben with a lifetime of guilt and remorse. Quoting Mr. Franklin's autobiography: *In 1736, I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox....I long regretted bitterly, and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation. This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child died under it, my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chosen.*

The vaccine campaign is truly a victim of its own success. It is precisely because vaccines are so effective at preventing illness that we are even discussing whether or not they should be given. Because of vaccines, many of you have never seen a child with polio, tetanus, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis or even chickenpox, or known a friend or family member whose child died of one of these diseases. Such success can make us complacent about vaccinating. But such an attitude, if it becomes widespread, can only lead to tragic results.

Prior to vaccines, thousands of children died or suffered long term disabilities due to these diseases. Here are just a few examples: Diphtheria caused as many as 15,520 deaths/year prior to the vaccine. Pertussis caused up to 9,000 deaths/year before the vaccine; now there are only about 150/year. Before the vaccine, Hib meningitis killed 600 children each year and left thousands of survivors with deafness, seizures, or mental retardation. Polio caused around 20,000 cases/year of paralytic polio prior to the vaccine, leaving many children in braces, in wheelchairs, and on iron lungs. It is estimated that 2.7 million unvaccinated children around the world die annually from measles. During 1964 and 1965 (before the vaccine) there were 20,000 infants born with rubella syndrome who were either deaf, blind, or mentally retarded.

Over the past several years, many people in Europe have chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccine after publication of an unfounded suspicion (later retracted) that the vaccine caused autism. As a result of under immunization, there have been small outbreaks of measles and several deaths from complications of measles in Europe over the past several years. Recently we experienced the largest

measles outbreak in the United States in the past decades, almost exclusively in unvaccinated persons.

By not vaccinating your child, you are taking advantage of thousands of others who do vaccinate their children, which decreases the likelihood that your child will contract one of these diseases (herd immunity). However, the increase in international travel means that diseases are always a threat. If someone with a serious vaccine-preventable disease enters your community and your child is not vaccinated, he or she is at risk. Each unvaccinated child is at risk for spreading infection to other children and adults, as well as persons with weak immune systems. We therefore find herd immunity an unacceptable way in which to protect your child as it also potentially endangers the whole community.

There is a lot of misinformation about vaccines and autism on the internet. Here are some reputable websites regarding vaccines: [www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety), [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org), [www.vaccineinformation.org](http://www.vaccineinformation.org), [www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center](http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center)

We are making you aware of these facts not to scare or coerce you, but to emphasize the importance of vaccinating your child. We recognize that the choice may be a very emotional one for some parents. We will do everything we can to convince you that vaccinating according to the schedule is the right thing to do. However, **should you have doubts, please discuss these with your health care provider in advance of your visit.** In some cases, we may alter the schedule to accommodate parental concerns or reservations. **Please be advised, however, that delaying or “breaking up the vaccines” to give one or two at a time over two or more visits goes against expert recommendations. This can put your child at risk for serious illness or death and goes against our medical advice as providers at Pediatric Clinic.** Such additional visits will require additional co-pays on your part. Furthermore, please realize that you will be required to sign a “Refusal to Vaccinate” acknowledgement in the event of lengthy delays.

Finally, **if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we may ask you to find another health care provider who shares your views.** Please recognize that by not vaccinating you are putting your child at unnecessary risk for life-threatening illness and disability, and even death.

As medical professionals, we feel very strongly that vaccinating children on schedule with currently available vaccines is absolutely the right thing to do for all children and young adults.

Thank you for your time in reading this policy, and please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with your primary pediatrician.

Sincerely,

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