



## Piedmont Pediatrics' Vaccine Policy Statement

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

We firmly believe in the safety of our vaccines.

We firmly believe that all children and young adults should receive all of the recommended vaccines according to the schedule published by the Centers of Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We firmly believe, based on 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 not been in routine pediatric vaccines for years, does not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

We firmly believe that vaccinating children and young adults may be the single most important health-promoting intervention we perform as health care providers and that you can perform as parents/caregivers.

We firmly believe in evidence-based medicine and the scientific method - which both confirm the importance and validity of vaccines. The recommended vaccines and the schedule given are the results of decades of scientific study and data-gathering on millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientists and physicians. With this mountain of scientific evidence available, we do not believe in medical decision making based on anecdotal evidence or unsubstantiated theories about autism.

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 or even lazy about vaccinating. However, such an attitude, if it becomes widespread, can only lead to tragic results.

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. In the past, these unvaccinated individuals were able to take advantage of herd immunity. However, as more people choose not to vaccinate, that added protection is lost. 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.

We are making you aware of these facts not to scare you 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. Please remember that our professional careers have been dedicated to improving the health and lives of our patients and their families. We would not make these recommendations if we were not convinced of their benefits.

Should you still have concerns, please discuss these with your health 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" (giving one or two at a time over two or more visits) goes against expert recommendations, scientific studies of safety and efficacy, and puts your child at risk for these diseases. Furthermore, please realize that you will be required to sign a "Refusal to Vaccinate" acknowledgement in the event of lengthy delays. If you truly do not believe in vaccinations for your child despite our professional recommendations, consider the possibility that you may be happier with another health care provider who shares your views.

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 any one of us.

Sincerely,

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