

Pediatrics of Northeastern Pennsylvania 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 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 for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We know, based on all available scientific literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities. It has been proven repeatedly in these scientific studies, that thimerosal, a preservative that was in some vaccines in the past is in no way associated with autism or other developmental disorders. While no vaccine is 100% safe, we firmly believe that the benefits of these vaccines far outweigh the risk of not being vaccinated.

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. The recommended vaccines and the administration schedule are the results of years and years of scientific study and data gathered on millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientists and physicians.

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. We, however, have each cared for children with these devastating diseases and have seen the loss of life and the serious complications that these illnesses cause. Every day we dedicate our efforts to keeping our patients healthy – vaccines are essential in this endeavor. They are literally “life-saving”.

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. Additionally, a recent Measles outbreak was seen in the San Diego area in spring 2008. This was started by an unvaccinated school age child who traveled out the United States, became infected and returned on an airplane to spread this disease among others – causing significant illness for some individuals. In 2011, additional outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough) were documented in California resulting in infant deaths and a widespread outbreak of mumps was seen in New York and New Jersey.

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. We will do everything we can to help you better understand

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. Please be advised that delaying or “breaking up the vaccines” to give one or two at a time over two or more visits goes against expert recommendations, and can put your child at risk for serious illness (or even death) and goes against our medical advice as providers at Pediatrics of Northeastern Pennsylvania.** If you decide to decline or refuse vaccinations, we strongly suggest looking for another office for pediatric care. We believe that by not vaccinating you are putting your child at unnecessary risk for life-threatening illness, disability and even death. A decision to not vaccinate is an active decision on your part to incur these risks. 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. As proof of our confidence in vaccines, all of our provider’s children have been fully vaccinated and did so at the recommended ages.

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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