

From the desk of Terence R. McAllister, MD, FAAP



## Performance Pediatrics Vaccine Policy Statement

- I firmly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illness and to save lives
- I firmly believe in the safety of vaccines
- I 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 Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics
- I firmly believe, based on all available literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities; I firmly believe that thimerosal, a preservative that has been in vaccines for decades and remains in trace amounts in some vaccines, does not cause autism or other developmental disabilities

These things being said, I recognize that there has always been and will likely always be controversy surrounding vaccination.

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 families 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.

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. The United States saw an outbreak in HiB in 2008 attributed to decrease in immunization, this outbreak has led to serious illness and death in several individuals.

I am making you aware of these facts not to scare you or coerce you, but to emphasize the importance of vaccinating your child. I recognize that the choice may be a very emotional one for some parents. I will do everything I 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 me at your next visit. In some cases, I can 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, and can put your child at risk for serious illness (or even death) and goes against my medical advice. Such additional visits may 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.

As a board-certified pediatrician, I 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 me.