

Princeton Nassau 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.

It is our policy 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 firmly believe, based on all available literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

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 their schedule given are the results of years and years of scientific study and data gathering on millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientists and physicians.

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. 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. This has resulted in measles outbreaks including serious complications of the disease and several deaths.

It is important to understand that immunization programs work best when as much of the population is vaccinated as possible. 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. We feel such an attitude unfairly takes advantage of all the other children and their parents who have chosen to vaccinate.

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.

In some cases, we may be requested to 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, has no medical benefit whatsoever, and goes against our medical advice as providers at Princeton Nassau Pediatrics. Such additional visits may require additional co-payments on your part, and may be difficult to accommodate. Furthermore, please realize that you will be required to sign a "Refusal to Vaccinate acknowledgement in the event of lengthy delays, and we will not be able to provide medical exemptions that eliminate your child's vaccine requirements without a valid scientific rationale.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we would encourage you to find another health care provider who shares your views. We cannot, however, recommend any such physician. 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. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with any one of our physicians. Another excellent resource for up-to-date vaccine information is www.vaccine.chop.edu. This site is published by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and provides useful information for parents about their children's immunizations.

Sincerely,

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