



## North Austin 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 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. We firmly believe that Thimerosal, a preservative that has been in vaccines for decades and remains in only in some Influenza vaccines, 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. 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.

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. 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. Outbreaks of Measles and Mumps begin occurring with only a 5% decrease in vaccination rates so it is important that ALL children be vaccinated.

We consider counting on “herd immunity” (a secondary protection to your child because other children around him are vaccinated) to be selfish and to be an unacceptable self-centered attitude. Furthermore, herd immunity does not protect you from illnesses such as Tetanus, which is ubiquitous in all soil.

Because it goes against expert recommendations, we do not accommodate “breaking up” vaccinations into multiple visits, and, other than the MMR/Varicella combination vaccine, we do not separate vaccine components. We feel it is cruel to make your child endure more shots than necessary, and returning to the office for multiple visits would increase your child’s potential exposure to illness (both from the delay in vaccinations and from other ill children who may be in the office) and worsen their perceived office experience.

Our goal is the health and comfort of your child, so our vaccine schedule is well thought out. It is designed to have the fewest number of injections given as early as possible, so that your child will be less likely to remember them. In some cases, we will be willing to alter our schedule as long as it is within the CDC’s age range guidelines for timely vaccination. By following a standard schedule, we also reduce the chance of error in vaccine administration.

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 persuade you that vaccinating according to the schedule is the right thing to do. However, **should you have doubts, discuss these with your health care provider in advance of your visit ideally by making a “preventive counseling” appointment. 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 our medical advice.**

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we will ask that you sign an informed refusal and we will ask you to find another health care provider who shares your views. We do not keep a list of such providers nor would we 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. 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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