

Immunization Policy

The physicians of APA are all in agreement that childhood immunizations are one of the greatest medical blessings our children have, and represent one of the greatest achievements of Western medicine.

Ironically, the very success of the vaccines has unfortunately caused some parents to believe that these immunizations are not necessary. The reasoning is that since the diseases are not seen often now, preventive vaccination is not needed. However, the diseases are still with us, and if a large number of children are not immunized, we will see increasing numbers of our children becoming ill with vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Also, there has been much in the popular media over the past 15-20 years regarding vaccines, their safety, and their possible associations with autism or mental retardation. This misinformation has caused some parents a great amount of fear and anxiety. Every study that has looked at these possible associations has disproved any such claim. The biggest recent event has been the total repudiation of the 1998 Andrew Wakefield study in Lancet which claimed a possible link between MMR vaccine and autism. Lancet has recently retracted the study, and Wakefield has been disciplined by the General Medical Council of Great Britain, which revoked his license, stating that he had been found guilty of serious professional misconduct. Earlier, the same governing body stated that his research was flawed, that he had presented his work in an irresponsible and dishonest way, and that he had shown callous disregard for the children in the study.

Thimerosal, a preservative that was commonly used in vaccines until a few years ago, has also been said to have caused problems for children, but this accusation has likewise been disproven. (Thimerosal has been removed from almost all childhood vaccines; this action was not necessary, and has resulted in more expensive vaccines.)

Childhood vaccines are safe and effective. The risk/benefit ratio is overwhelmingly weighted in favor of safety. We would not offer and recommend these vaccines otherwise. We are confident that your child will be protected safely as we administer these immunizations.

The United States has the very best medical care in the world. Not long ago in the U.S., we saw many of the devastating and often fatal diseases that are no longer seen because of immunizations. Polio used to be rampant. Measles often killed. H. flu meningitis (a bacterial meningitis) was a common occurrence. Deafness resulted from rubella. Today in underdeveloped countries these diseases still exist, and children still die from them.

For the following reasons, our practice strongly recommends timely immunizations:

1. For your child's health, immunizations are essential.
2. For the public good, immunizations are essential. Pockets of children that are not immunized are often detrimental to the health of the community. This has recently occurred in San Diego.

3. When one of our doctors is on call, it is impossible for him or her to know who is immunized and who is not. An unimmunized child is at higher risk for serious diseases. Having unimmunized patients in our practice compromises the care we want to give; it is not fair to your child, to other children in our practice, or to the doctor.

Our recommendations to immunize represent some of the best advice that we can give. You bring your children to us for counsel, advice, and treatment; we, in turn, are committed to doing the best for your child that we can, honestly, scientifically, and medically. Our relationship is built on mutual trust and confidence. If you cannot trust us in this area, it is likely that you will not trust us in other areas; thus, the physician-patient bond is broken.

We are very willing to discuss immunizations with you. However, we are firmly convinced that childhood vaccines are both safe and effective. There is no medical reason to deviate from the established vaccine schedule, to delay immunizations or break up vaccines; multiple vaccines given at the same time are safe, and another recent study has proven this. If you choose to break up the immunizations, be aware that this goes against our medical advice and puts your child at risk for serious and possibly life-threatening disease. Also, each additional visit required to break up or space out vaccines will require a co-pay as well as a \$25 office administration fee. In addition, please realize that we will ask you to sign a refusal to vaccinate form in the event of lengthy delays.

We do not desire to lose any of our patients, but if our stance does not fit your views, and if, despite our best efforts, there is still refusal to vaccinate your children, we will eventually regretfully ask you to find another physician.

Thank you for taking the time to read this policy. Please feel free to discuss your questions with any of us.

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For More Information

[CDC website on immunizations](#)

[The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's Vaccine Education website](#)

[Vaccine Safety Information from the American Academy of Pediatrics](#)