



Wilmington Health Pediatric Vaccination Policy

As healthcare professionals who provide care to children:

- 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 Prevention 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 some 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 healthcare providers, and that you can perform as parents/caregivers. The recommended vaccines and the vaccine schedule 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.

This said, we 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 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. After publication of an unfounded accusation (later retracted) that MMR vaccine caused autism in 1998, many Europeans chose not to vaccinate their children. As a result of under-immunization, Europe experienced large outbreaks of measles, with several deaths from disease complications.

In 2012, there were more than 48,000 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in the United States, resulting in 22 deaths. Most victims were infants younger than six months of age. Many children who contracted the illness had parents who made a conscious decision not to vaccinate. In 2015, there was a measles outbreak in Disneyland, California (probably started by an infected park visitor who had traveled from the Philippines). The outbreak eventually spread to 147 people and, again, many were too young to have been vaccinated.

When you don't vaccinate, you take a significant risk with your child's health and the health of others around them. Some of our patients are not old enough to have been vaccinated yet, fully or at all. Some are unable to be vaccinated fully for specific medical diagnoses. Some have weakened or non-existent immune systems due to congenital immunodeficiencies or cancer. These patients are all EXTREMELY vulnerable to vaccine-preventable illnesses they might contract by contact with unvaccinated children in our offices. The vast majority of parents who DO fully vaccinate their children decrease the burden of preventable illness in their communities, thereby decreasing YOUR child's likelihood of contracting those preventable illnesses. A decision NOT to vaccinate takes selfish advantage of those who DO make sure their children are vaccinated.

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 convince you that vaccinating according to the schedule is the right thing to do. However, should you have doubts, please discuss these with your healthcare provider at your visit. In some cases, we may 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 our medical advice as providers at Wilmington Health Pediatrics. Such additional visits may require additional co-pays on your part. Please realize that you will also be required to sign a "Refusal to Vaccinate" acknowledgement in the event of lengthy delays.

Because we are committed to protecting the health of your children and all of our patients through vaccination, we require all of our patients to be vaccinated. Infants will receive all age-appropriate vaccines no later than three months of age, with additional doses at most well visits through 2 years of age. Children will receive additional recommended booster doses at the age of 4, and will be given recommended 11–12-year preteen vaccinations. We will complete 16-year teen vaccinations before each child's 17th birthday. And, we will also give your child/teen an annual influenza vaccination unless they receive it at a school clinic or pharmacy.

Because we are committed to protecting the health of your children and all of our patients through vaccination, we recommend complete and full vaccination of all children following the guidelines of the CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>. However, in order to continue a relationship as your pediatric provider, we will **require** the following minimum progress towards full vaccination:

1. At least one dose of the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP) vaccine, one dose of *Haemophilus influenza*, type B (HiB) vaccine, one dosage of polio vaccine (IPV), and one dose of pneumococcal vaccine by 6 months, with progression towards all recommended doses of those vaccines by one year of age.
2. One dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and one dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine by 18 months.
3. Booster doses of the DTaP, HiB, and pneumococcal vaccines by age two.
4. Completion of all vaccines required for public school entry by entry to kindergarten.
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Completion of a tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) and meningococcal vaccine by entry to 7th grade.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we will ask you to find another healthcare 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 your child on schedule with currently available vaccines is absolutely the right thing to do to protect all children and young adults. Thank you for taking the time to read this policy. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with any one of us.

Your pediatric primary care team.