

Mendakota 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 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 scientific studies, that vaccines do 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 physicians, and that you can perform as parents or caregivers. The recommended vaccines, and their schedule to be 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 have always been, and may always be controversy surrounding vaccination. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, persuaded by his brother, was opposed to the smallpox vaccine until scientific data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he delayed inoculating his favorite son, who contracted smallpox and died at the age of 4 years, leaving a lifetime of guilt and remorse. Quoting Mr. Franklin's autobiography:

In 1736, I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of 4 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 to omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive the results if the 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 in 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 have 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.

In the previous decade, many people in Europe chose not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccine, after publication of a fraudulent study proposing that the vaccine causes autism. This study was later retracted and the medical license of the author was revoked. As a result of under immunization, there have been, and continue to be thousands of cases of measles in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, leading to long term injuries and deaths. Recent outbreaks of measles in the United States have been directly linked to travel to the Philippines, Europe and Africa where the disease was contracted and then brought back home by an infected person. The infected person then passed the illness on to other unsuspecting, and unimmunized children (the most recent large outbreak in Disneyland from December, 2014 to February, 2015, affected 117 people from 7 states. The last outbreak in Minneapolis was in 2011 with 23 cases). In 2014, the United States, with 668 cases from 27 states, had its highest number of measles cases since Measles was declared eradicated from the U.S. in 2000.

Furthermore, by not vaccinating your child you are taking selfish advantage of thousands of others who do vaccinate their children (so called “herd immunity”), which decreases the likelihood that your child will contract one of these diseases. We feel such an attitude to be self-centered and unacceptable in a civilized society.

We are making you aware of these facts 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. Should you have doubts, please discuss these with your pediatrician in advance of 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 them over two or more visits goes against expert recommendations, and can put your child at risk for serious illness and even death. 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 acknowledgment, in the event of lengthy delays.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all of our efforts, 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, 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 us or our staff.

Jennifer W. Gobel, M.D.

Leann West, M.D.

Paul Wratkowski, D.O.

Mendakota Pediatrics, Ltd.

July 20, 2015