

## **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 past 20 years, many people in Europe have chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine, after publication of a fraudulent study proposing that the measles 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 World Health Organization considers the low immunization rates in many countries to be at a crisis level.

By not vaccinating your child you are taking selfish advantage of millions of other children and adults who have been immunized (so called “herd immunity”), which decreases the likelihood that *your* child will contract one of these diseases. Conversely, if your child does become infected with a vaccine preventable illness, your

child’s presence in public puts babies and those older children and adults who have impaired immune system at high risk of contracting 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. Furthermore, you will be required to sign a refusal to vaccinate acknowledgment statement in the event of lengthy delays.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all of our efforts, we may 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 person. Please recognize that by not vaccinating you are putting your child at unnecessary risk for life-threatening illness, disability, and even death.

As pediatricians, 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.

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Mendakota Pediatrics, Ltd.  
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