

DUPAGE PEDIATRICS, LTD

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3/10/2015

RE: Vaccine Policy

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In light of recent and reoccurring outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in Illinois and across the United States, we would like to clarify our office policy as it pertains to the delivery of vaccines to our patients.

It is the strong belief of all the physicians at DuPage Pediatrics that all children who are able should be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases as soon as possible.

We believe that the vaccination schedule as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is the best researched and most scientifically sound vaccine schedule as it provides the earliest and most robust immunity for infants and toddlers.

Based on that schedule, children will receive the primary rounds of all recommended vaccines by 2 years of age. There is no compelling scientific evidence to suggest that alternate or delayed vaccine schedules provide any benefit to pediatric patients (in fact, delayed schedules increase the length of time children are susceptible to vaccine preventable diseases), nor is there any indication that the vaccine schedule set forth by the CDC and AAP puts undue stress on the immune system of children or introduces too many antigens at any one time. The total number of antigens introduced by way of vaccinations over the first two years of life is approximately 150, which is a small fraction of the roughly 2,000-6,000 antigens that children encounter in their environment every day.

It is our policy on vaccines that patients receive the initial round of pediatric vaccines according to CDC and AAP guidelines by 2 years of age. This has always been the policy of the practice. **It is the goal of all our physicians that all our patients, regardless of age, receive their vaccinations according to the CDC and AAP schedule.** Due to the increased prevalence of vaccine preventable diseases and out of concern for the safety of all our patients, we can no longer offer the flexibility regarding vaccines that we may have offered in the past.

Moving forward, any families not compliant with our vaccine policy or who have not created a plan with one of our physicians to obtain the necessary vaccines by two years of age will be asked to transition out of the practice and to find another practitioner to continue their pediatric care.

Families already in the practice with children under the age of two who have expressed desires to not have their children vaccinated or have not started the vaccination process by 4 months of age will also be asked to transition to another practice.

New patients who indicate that they do not want to start or continue vaccinating their children according to CDC and AAP recommendations, or who are following a significantly delayed vaccine schedule will not be allowed to join the practice.

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Our rationale for this decision stems from our concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the children we care for at DuPage Pediatrics. **We believe that a significantly delayed vaccine schedule puts children at too great a risk of contracting vaccine preventable diseases, and it also poses a serious risk to our other patients who are either too young to be vaccinated against certain illnesses or who are unable to receive vaccines for medical reasons.**

The notion of herd immunity is what we rely on to maintain a reasonable level of protection for our patients who cannot receive vaccines, and if children are unvaccinated or under vaccinated, the protection from herd immunity is lost and there is a greater likelihood that vaccine preventable diseases will be able to penetrate a community, as has been seen recently with the measles outbreaks in California and Palatine as well as multiple other localized outbreaks of illness around the country in recent years. **We simply do not feel that we can accept that increased risk as it runs counter to what we believe as physicians and as a practice and increases the likelihood that our patients may contract vaccine preventable diseases.**

We understand that some parents may still desire to split up vaccines or give a smaller number of vaccines at each visit due to concerns about the current vaccine schedule. We are willing to work with families that desire to spread out vaccines, but our expectation would still be that children receive their primary round of vaccines by 2 years of age. For those families desiring a slightly slower vaccine schedule, we would ask that parents be consistent in returning for nurse visits to receive vaccines between scheduled well visits to ensure that our patients remain on schedule to complete the primary vaccines by 2 years of age. Our clinical staff will be reviewing immunization records on an as needed basis for those on a slower schedule, and we may be contacting you based on your child's immunization status.

There are a number of excellent resources available online regarding pediatric vaccines and the vaccine schedule, such as:

The CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/> ,

The AAP: <http://www2.aap.org/immunization/>

The Center for Vaccine Awareness and Research at Texas Children's Hospital
<http://www.texaschildrens.org/vaccine/>

The Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
<http://vec.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center>

The Institutes of Medicine, a nonpartisan organization that receives no funding from medical or pharmaceutical companies to subsidize its research, issued a report in 2013 stating that there is no evidence to suggest that the current pediatric vaccine schedule is unsafe.

We encourage every parent to review these high quality, well researched sources of information and to contact us with questions about the vaccine schedule or other issues regarding pediatric vaccination.

Sincerely,

The Physicians at DuPage Pediatrics