Immunization Policy

Athens 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 recommended vaccines according to the schedule publish by the Center for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

We firmly believe that vaccinating children and young adults may be the single most important health promoting intervention we perform as health care providers, and that you can perform as parents/ guardians. The recommended vaccines and administration schedule are the result of years of scientific study and data gathering on millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientist and physicians.

We firmly believe, based on all available literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities. We believe that the preservatives in vaccines are safe and do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

These things being said, we recognize that there has always been and will likely always be controversy surrounding vaccination. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, persuaded by his brother, was opposed to smallpox vaccine until scientific convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his son Franky, who contracted smallpox and died at the age 4, leaving Ben with a lifetime of guilt and remorse. Quoting Mr. Franklin’s autobiography:

*“In 1736, I lost one of my sons. A fine boy of four years old, by 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 who omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a 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 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 chicken pox, or known a friend or family member whose child died of one of these diseases. Such success can make us complacent and hesitant about vaccinating. But such an attitude, if it becomes widespread, can lead to tragic results.

Over the past several years, many people in Europe and the United States have chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccines after publication of an unfound suspicion (later retracted) that the vaccine caused autism. As a result of under immunization, there have been many outbreaks of measles and several deaths from complications of measles over the past several years. It is a fact that 1 in 5 children with measles is sick enough to need hospitalization.

Furthermore, by not vaccinating your child you are taking advantage of thousands of others who DO vaccinate their children, which decreases the likelihood that your child will contract one of these diseases. We feel that an unvaccinated child poses undue risks to our immunocompromised patients and to our patients less than 12 months old whom are not yet old enough to receive vaccines like MMR. Since the early stage of measles presents very similar to influenza, your unvaccinated child could bring that illness into our clinic and expose this vulnerable population. This is a risk we do not want to take.

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 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 me before your visit. In some cases, we may alter the schedule to accommodate parental concern or reservations. Please be advised, however, that delaying vaccines goes against expert recommendations, and can put your child as risk.

Finally, if you should refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, after one year of discussion 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.

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 question or concerns you may have about vaccines with us.

Sincerely,

Rachel Worley, MD Melanie Long, FNP Joy Asbury, FNP