

# Sample Vaccine Policy Statement

Ready for you to adapt  
for your practice

Use the vaccine policy statement below as is, or modify it to reflect your practice's own strong statement of support for the vital role vaccination plays in safeguarding the health of children. Your practice's clearly expressed commitment to immunization can be powerfully persuasive with parents who are hesitant to have their child vaccinated because of scientifically invalid information they have encountered on the Internet or through the news media. This policy statement, originally developed by clinicians at All Star Pediatrics in Lionville, Pennsylvania, has been modified by the Immu-

nization Action Coalition. All Star Pediatrics posts their policy in every exam room and gives it to parents at prenatal "meet and greet" and newborn clinic visits. As a result, parents new to All Star Pediatrics know exactly where their doctors stand on immunization, and the families of established patients feel supported in the choice they've made to immunize their children. All Star Pediatrics' policy statement was originally published as a letter to the editor in AAP News, May 2008, by Bradley J. Dyer, MD, FAAP, and his colleagues at All Star Pediatrics.

## [Your Practice Name] 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 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. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin, persuaded by his brother, was opposed to smallpox vaccine until scientific data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his favorite son Franky. The boy contracted smallpox and died at the age of 4,

leaving Franklin with a lifetime of guilt and remorse. In his autobiography, Franklin wrote:

*"In 1736, I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four 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 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 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 underimmunization, 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

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE ►

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. By not vaccinating, you also take selfish advantage of thousands of others who do vaccinate their children, thereby decreasing the likelihood that your child will contract a vaccine-preventable disease. We feel that refusing to vaccinate is self-centered and unacceptable.

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 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 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 [Your practice name here].** Such additional visits will 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 through vaccination, we require all of our patients to be vaccinated. Infants will receive all age-appropriate recommended vaccines by three months of age, with additional recommended vaccines as well as booster doses by two years of age. Children will receive additional recommended booster doses by the time they are seven years old, and will be given recommended 11–12-year preteen vaccinations by the time they are 13 years old. 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.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all 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 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.

**All the healthcare providers of [Your practice name]**

*List names and signatures of healthcare providers, if desired.*