

January 2009

Dear Parents,

Due to recent questions and concerns regarding vaccinations, our practice would like to explain why we feel immunizations are vital to the care of children and adolescents. We strongly believe, based on all of the literature, evidence and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities. There is a large body of scientific evidence that refutes any connection between autism and thimerosal, a preservative that has been used in vaccines for decades. Thimerosal was removed from U.S. vaccinations between 1999 and 2001 and this had no effect on the rate of autism in this country. Despite a great deal of misinformation that has been presented in the media and online, there is no evidence that supports a link to vaccines.

On the other hand, there is very strong research and experience that shows us the benefit of immunizing infants and children. In one sense, the overwhelming success of our immunization programs has become its own worst enemy. Thanks to our modern immunizations, most parents of this generation have never seen a child with polio, tetanus, whooping cough, or bacterial meningitis. They have never comforted a friend or family member whose child has died of one of these diseases. They have not needed to care for a child with lifelong disability as a result of a vaccine-preventable illness. When the danger of these illnesses does not seem imminent, we may question the need to protect against them. The bacteria and viruses that cause these diseases still exist, and in some parts of the world they are still very active. Undervaccinated children are at risk for diseases that can be brought into the United States by people visiting from other countries or U.S. travelers returning from these countries. There have been outbreaks of mumps, measles, and whooping cough in the U.S. in recent years that caused significant illness in unimmunized individuals.

We feel strongly that every child should follow the recommended schedule of core vaccinations published by the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. We do not believe parents should delay immunizing their own child based on the belief that the risk of illness is low, since everyone else is immunized. From the perspective of public health and safety, it is simple to see where this logic breaks down. We cannot, in good conscience, practice in a way that puts our patients and communities at risk.

We recognize that this issue is important to you and that it can be confusing with all of the different information sources competing for your attention and trust. We present you these facts with the hope that it will help you make an informed decision about your child's health. We will be happy to provide further information regarding vaccine safety or answer questions about individual vaccines or diseases, and you should never hesitate to ask questions of your primary care provider about any topic. However, we ask that those who disagree with complete immunization on the recommended schedule seek out another pediatric practice which shares your views. Please let our staff know if you need assistance in transitioning to another office and we appreciate your time and consideration in reading this policy.

Sincerely,

**Woburn & North Andover Pediatric Associates**

Information for Parents:  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)  
[www.cispiimmunize.org](http://www.cispiimmunize.org)  
[www.vaccinateyourbaby.org](http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org)  
"Autism's False Prophets", by Dr. Paul Offit

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