



## **Traverse Area Pediatric & Adolescent Clinic 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 published by 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 vaccines given in combination are every bit as safe as those given individually.

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/caregivers. The recommended vaccines and their schedule 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.

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 data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his favorite son Franky, who contracted smallpox and died at the age of 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 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 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.

Over the past several years, many people in Europe have chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccine after publication of an unfounded suspicion (later retracted) that the vaccine caused autism. As a result of under immunization, there have been small outbreaks of measles and several deaths from complications of measles in Europe over the past several years. Indeed, in our own community a recent pertussis outbreak led to hundreds with the illness.

Furthermore, by not vaccinating your child you are taking selfish 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 such an attitude to be 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 health care 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 TAPAC.** Such

additional visits may require additional co-pays on your part. Furthermore, please realize that you will be required to sign a “Refusal to Vaccinate” acknowledgement in the event of delays.

It is our expectation that all newborns in our practice as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, will receive their 2,4,6-, 12-, 15- and 18-month vaccines in entirety before their second birthday. It is also our expectation that older patients new to our practice be up to date with their vaccines. Should a patient who is not up to date with vaccines wish to join our practice a grace period for catch up may be discussed and carefully planned with our physicians and vaccine nurse coordinator. Exception will only be made for patients with established and documented medical contraindications.

This policy does not dismiss current patients from the practice that have not received their vaccines. It is our hope and expectation that these families use this opportunity to begin a catch-up schedule so that they may become protected from the risks of vaccine preventable diseases. Please understand that unvaccinated children may be asked to take extra precautions in our office to protect our most vulnerable patients. We will insist on your cooperation in this regard.

Finally, if you absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we will ask you to consider finding 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 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 any one of us.

Sincerely,

Sarah C. Mulder M.D.  
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Ben Hazen M.D.  
Ashleigh Catton, NP  
Molly Jonna M.D.