

Medical Associates of R.I.

Vaccine Policy

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 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 their 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.

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 four, 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 chicken pox, 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 people in Europe chose not to vaccinate their children. As a result of under-immunization, there were large outbreaks of measles, with several deaths from complications of the disease. Despite its elimination in the US in 2000, measles cases are being reported across the country. Travelers bring measles into the US, and it can spread and cause outbreaks among people who are not vaccinated. In

2023 and 2024 there have been 99 cases of measles in 26 states, and the number keeps rising. Measles can cause serious complications, such as blindness, pneumonia, hospitalization, and 1 in 1000 people with measles dies from the disease. Severe complications of measles are more likely in children under 5 years and adults older than 20 years old.

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 healthcare provider in advance of your visit.

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 Medical Associates of R.I. Please realize that you will also be required to sign a “Refusal to Vaccinate” acknowledgement in the event of lengthy delays.

All patients in the practice are strongly encouraged to receive hepatitis B vaccine at birth, DTaP, Hib, polio, pneumococcal, and rotavirus vaccines by three months of age; measles, mumps and rubella, varicella (chickenpox), and hepatitis A vaccines at age 12–15 months; HPV and meningococcal vaccine at 11–12 years (HPV can also be given as early as 9 years); and annual influenza and COVID-19 vaccine. Also, if RSV vaccine was not given during pregnancy, your newborn should receive an RSV preventive antibody before or during the RSV season. You can view a parent-friendly version of this schedule at www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4050.pdf.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, we will ask you to find another healthcare 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.

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