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 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 now remains ONLY in the multi-dose flu vaccine, does not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.

We firmly believe that vaccination 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 given are the results of years and years of scientific study and date 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 this brother, was opposed to smallpox vaccine until scientific data convinced him otherwise. Tragically, he had delayed inoculating his son, who contracted smallpox and died at the age of 4, leaving Mr. Franklin with a lifetime of guilt and remorse.

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. But if the “anti-vaccine” attitude becomes widespread, it can only lead to the spread of preventable diseases with tragic results.

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 such an attitude to be self-centered and unfair.

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 some cases, we may alter the schedule to accommodate parental concerns or reservations. Please be advised that delaying or “breaking up the vaccines” to give one or two at a time over several 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 Sunny View Pediatrics. Such additional visits may also require additional co-pays on your part. All parents who choose not to vaccinate or significantly delay the recommended schedule will be required to sign a “Refusal to Vaccinate” acknowledgment.

Finally, if you should absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child despite all our efforts, you may want to consider if our practice is a “good fit” for your needs. We strive to provide the best possible care for children and a key element of this care is immunizations. If you choose to take your child elsewhere due to conflicting opinions on immunizations, this is certainly your right. However, you are unlikely to find any medical doctor in the Flathead Valley who would recommend against routine immunizations. Please recognize that by not vaccinating, YOU are putting your child at unnecessary risk for life-threatening illness, 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,

Ken Graham, MD
Lynn Dykstra, MD
Michael Schwaller, MD
Valerie Beebe, FNP

Jill Pate, RN
Rebecca Decker, RN
Dawnita French, RN
Wallace Wilder, MD

Chelsea McKoy, RN
Michele Anderson, RN

7306-012  12/12