

## Watchung Pediatrics Vaccine Policy Statement

Since our formation in 1994, at Watchung Pediatrics, we pride ourselves on providing comprehensive, compassionate and state-of-the-art, quality care to our patients and families in the communities that we are proud to serve. Furthermore, the care that we deliver is guided by the principles and recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

At Watchung Pediatrics, we truly believe that vaccinating children and adolescents to prevent them from acquiring life threatening diseases is probably the most important service that we offer to patients in our practice. Simply put, vaccines save countless lives.

Parents and caretakers may feel that the decision to immunize their child is a personal one and they shouldn't be required to immunize their child if they don't want to. However the decision not to immunize, affects not just the health of an individual child, but the health and well-being of other children and adults too. All decisions in life have risks and benefits associated with them. The decision not to immunize a child isn't just that a parent or caretaker isn't willing to take a risk that something bad will happen to their child as a result of getting the vaccine. Rather it is also accepting the risk that their child or other people could suffer the crippling or deadly effects of a vaccine preventable disease if they aren't immunized. As health care providers, we know based on the medical data that the benefits of immunizing children and adolescents far outweighs any perceived or unproven risks of harm to children and adolescents from the vaccines. There is now very reliable medical evidence that vaccines or any of their components don't cause Autism or any other developmental disabilities.

Parents or caretakers may also feel that polio, tetanus, whooping cough, meningitis, measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella are rare diseases that their child is unlikely to come in contact with, so they are "safe" in declining vaccinations. However vaccination programs only work well when as many people as possible in a community are immunized. This is called, "herd immunity" and it protects children and adults who are unable to receive the vaccines because they are too young or too old or immunosuppressed. In order for herd immunity to work effectively, 90% of people in a community must be vaccinated. Because of fear and misinformation from unreliable sources, and complacency about acquiring the diseases, some parents and caretakers are refusing or delaying the administration of life-saving vaccines to their children and teens. As a result, for the first time in many decades, the herd immunity in our country has dipped dangerously below 90% putting all of us at risk of acquiring horrible diseases.

As your trusted health care providers, we feel as many other pediatric practices do, that we have an important responsibility to protect our families and communities from vaccine preventable diseases. Because of this, we can no longer accept the risk that unimmunized or under-immunized children or teens pose to other children and their families in our practice and in our communities. Therefore we have revised our Watchung Pediatrics' vaccine policy based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This is consistent with what many other pediatric practices across the country are doing because of the recent resurgence of deadly vaccine preventable diseases.

We want to assure you that vaccines are safer today than they have ever been and that it is completely fine to give multiple or combination vaccines at the same office visit. This is because the reactivity of the individual vaccines is a tiny fraction of what a child's immune system would be faced with if it were exposed to the actual diseases. In fact one medical study concluded that a child could receive 10,000 vaccines and it would still be safer and less of a stress to their immune system, than their exposure to the actual diseases. Of course the amount of vaccines that are actually given to children and adolescents doesn't even come close to that amount.

Because we understand that despite the medical evidence and our assurances, a few parents and caregivers may still be skeptical about giving multiple vaccines at an office visit, we do try to accommodate our families who want to give fewer vaccines per visit. However this concession has no medical benefit whatsoever and delaying vaccines dangerously affects the herd immunity and puts children, adolescents and adults at an increased risk of illness. Therefore Watchung Pediatrics will accept delays of vaccine administration only if they are within the “window” period of the recommendations of the AAP and CDC.

Our policy states:

- 1) All children must receive all vaccines recommended by the AAP that are mandated for school entry by the State of New Jersey.
- 2) All children must begin receiving their immunizations at age 2 months.
- 3) We fervently recommend utilizing the immunization schedule as determined by the AAP and CDC.
- 4) If a parent or caregiver elects to limit their child to 2 vaccines at a time, they must come into the office at 1-2 week intervals to stay within the recommended “window” for the vaccines.
- 5) If a parent or caregiver elects to limit their child to 1 vaccine at a time, they must come into the office at weekly intervals to stay within the recommended “window” for the vaccines.
- 6) All parents who don’t follow the AAP vaccine guidelines exactly must sign a waiver that they are utilizing an alternate vaccine schedule. This schedule must be approved by a physician or nurse practitioner.
- 7) Exceptions for the AAP window include: Hep B, Hep A, Influenza, MMR and Gardasil.
- 8) The MMR vaccine may be held off until age 2.
- 9) The Hep B series must be completed by the time of school entry.
- 10) Hep A may be deferred until such time that NJ requires it for school entry.
- 11) The Influenza vaccine is strongly recommended for all children and teens age 18 or younger. It isn’t mandatory except for all children in New Jersey in a state registered daycare or preschool.
- 12) The Gardasil vaccine series is approved and strongly recommended for older children and teens, ideally between the ages of 11-13, but it isn’t mandatory.
- 13) Parents or caregivers who are following an alternate vaccine schedule, who don’t adhere to their agreement and who don’t have a medical reason for not bringing their child to the appointment will be given 1 warning. If they fail to keep an additional vaccine appointment, they will be discharged from the practice.
- 14) Parents or caretakers who don’t agree with the Watchung Pediatrics vaccine policy will be given a 1 month grace period to find another Pediatrics practice.

Our providers welcome discussion about our Watchung Pediatrics Vaccine policy with any of our families. We hope that you understand that we have devised our policy in order to protect children, their families and our communities from dreadful diseases and potential death by administering safe and effective vaccines in a reasonable, organized and practical way.