

Vaccine Policy

Effective July 1, 2013, Wheaton Pediatrics will implement a new policy on vaccination. Because all available scientific evidence favors vaccinating according to the schedule set forth by the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics, and because not following this schedule can potentially harm children who do follow the recommended schedule by unnecessarily exposing them to vaccine-preventable diseases, and because pediatrics is based in preventive medicine and based on the trust relationship of parents partnering with pediatricians, we will no longer see families who choose to not vaccinate their children. Patients who currently do not vaccinate should discuss with their provider the best way to catch their child up.

As health care providers, it is our responsibility to protect as many children from disease as possible. Vaccines may be one of the greatest advances in medicine in that they have saved countless numbers of lives and children from illnesses. All vaccines are safe and continue to be studied for potential harmful effects, and in most cases vaccines are developed and tested for at least a decade before being used routinely. No current available studies support the idea of vaccines causing harm, and no data supports the use of schedules other than that set forth by the CDC and AAP. Parents who choose to not have their children vaccinated according to guidelines not only put their children at risk of getting sick, but also indirectly put other children at risk. Pediatrics is a preventive medicine specialty: vaccines are the primary way we prevent illness; and refusal of vaccines shows a lack of trust that extends to all our advice on prevention and treatment of illness. We want to make sure our vaccinating families feel safe and know that they are not being put at higher risk simply coming to the waiting room of our office. This is why we feel strongly that the best way to protect the health of all children in our practice is to ensure that everyone follows the recommended schedule.

At times parents have requested to alter the vaccine schedule due to their concerns or reservations. Although we do not agree with this approach, we will allow you to sign a vaccine refusal/deferment form and work together to get your child immunized as soon as possible. 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, can put your child at risk for serious illness (or even death) and goes against our medical advice as providers at Wheaton Pediatrics. Such additional visits will be scheduled as available with our providers and will require additional co-pays on your part. We will continue to accept alternate vaccine schedules, provided there is an ongoing effort by parents teaming with provider to have vaccines up-to-date. There is no "safe" alternate schedule; however, at minimum we will accept the minimum recommended vaccines as required by the state of Illinois.

This policy change is a step-up from our current policy. Effective January 1, 2012, Wheaton Pediatrics can no longer accept new patients who do not vaccinate, and we can no longer see infants whose parents do not initiate vaccines in a way congruent with AAP and CDC schedules, which serve to protect these vulnerable infants from vaccine-preventable illnesses early. Our next policy change takes that further. In good conscience we can no longer provide care to unvaccinated children.

We believe firmly that parents are the best advocates for their children's health. Our intent is not to "bully" or "coerce" parents. Feel free to choose another provider who shares your views on vaccines. We would be happy to provide numbers for referral networks if you choose to seek another provider.

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. In the Resources section of our website, in the Parents tab, you'll find the recommended schedule and some web sites you may visit for additional information. Thank you for your time in reading this policy. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with any of our providers.