



Garden Pediatrics Alternate Vaccine Schedule Position Statement



Garden Pediatrics advocates vaccinations. Our job is not only to take care of our patients when they are sick but also to help them grow up healthy and strong, teaching them to make wise decisions for their future as they develop.

Garden Pediatrics physicians and nurse practitioners are all board certified, highly trained and awarded providers who adhere to and keep up-to-date with current standards of care¹ in pediatrics. It is our job to communicate what we know to our patient families and to make recommendations based on these guidelines. If we do not do that because a parent doesn't agree with said standards, we are not doing our jobs. What would happen, for example, if a parent communicated to us that that they would prefer not use antibiotics ever to treat their children and then, down the road, their child contracted a serious bacterial infection where there was a known cure? Would the pediatrician be justified in not recommending that life-saving antibiotic because they remembered that the parent did not like those medicines? Any reasonable person would answer resoundingly, no. It is the same with vaccinations. We know that it protects and prevents and saves lives. It is our job to educate and inform and recommend that children be protected from these diseases that don't have to harm them.

Immunizations are one of medicine's greatest gifts and provided us with a great reduction in mortality and morbidity, allowing more children than ever to reach adulthood without the crippling effects left by vaccine-preventable illnesses should they contract and survive them. In our own practice we have parents of patients who demonstrate the repercussions of illnesses like polio (muscle atrophy, gait abnormality) and haemophilus influenzae (deafness) who suffered these diseases prior to the development of vaccines to prevent them.

While a debate still lingers in popular culture, there is no debate in science regarding the safety and the benefits of vaccinations. It is the best thing we can do to prevent these serious life and quality-of-life threatening diseases. It has been proven repeatedly that vaccinations do not cause autism. Further, it has been demonstrated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that the recommended schedules of immunizations for our children are safe and pose no additional risk. In fact, in accordance with the recommended schedule we are better able to protect our children sooner and when they are more likely to get sicker. The schedule recommended by the CDC and AAP is the only one that has been tested scientifically; and not only has been proven safe, but also the most efficacious.

That being said, Garden Pediatrics does not discriminate against parents who are trying to do the best they can for their children, but are nevertheless making the decision not to vaccinate them or to vaccinate them on their own schedules.



If a parent chooses not to vaccinate at all, or to vaccinate on a plan that is different than what is the standard of care in our field, we still need to do our job and vigilantly educate, inform and recommend what is in the best interest of the child.

How do we accomplish this is?

- 1.) Any patient family who prefers not to vaccinate or vaccinate differently than the recommended schedule is required to have an initial vaccination consultation with their pediatrician. The purpose of this visit is to listen to each other. The provider would like to hear and understand the concerns of the parent. Further, the parent benefits questions answered, resources given and can be advised on the current scientific data and science behind immunizations.
- 2.) If parents refuse to vaccinate, or vaccinate on an alternate schedule, they will sign a refusal to vaccinate form that will be kept on file with the in-house yellow card (our hard copy that is similar to the parent's folded one that we keep in addition to our electronic records). This form will be updated at each visit where an immunization is recommended.
- 3.) If a parent decides to immunize on an alternate schedule, we can help the family determine a plan that helps meet their goals, as well as gets their child vaccinated. This discussion is ideally done at the vaccination consultation appointment.
- 4.) If vaccinating on an alternate schedule, all patients must have a visit with the doctor at those vaccine appointments to make sure that the spacing is appropriate and that the patient is in suitable health to receive their vaccines at that time.
- 5.) If a child is not vaccinated, or under-vaccinated, the parent must inform the person answering the phone when asking an illness related question or making an appointment of this information. Further, we ask them to remind the receptionist at time of check-in so that we can efficiently quarantine the child if a vaccine preventable illness is suspected.

The entire team at Garden Pediatrics feels called to do what we do. We love partnering with parents and caring for our patients and their families.

Please sign below that you have read and understand our policy. By signing you are not agreeing to any specific vaccination plan, but by signing you are indicating that you can comply with how we are best able to care for your child and family.

Sincerely,

Cameo A. Carter, MD
Garden Pediatrics Team Pediatrician
CEO and Medical Director