

## **South Trace Pediatrics Vaccine Policy**

The physicians at South Trace Pediatrics have developed this policy concerning vaccinations to assist patients in their decision about whether to seek medical care from our practice. First, our beliefs about vaccines and their corresponding preventable illnesses.

- We firmly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illness and save the lives of the children that we serve.
- 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 American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and the Alabama Department of Health.
- We firmly believe, based upon all available literature, evidence, and current studies, that vaccines do 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 health care providers, and that parents can perform as caregivers. The recommended vaccines and the vaccine schedule are the result of years and years of scientific study and data collection from millions of children by thousands of our best and brightest scientists and physicians.

### **Vaccine Policy and Comments**

We recognize that there have always been, and always will be, questions about vaccination. We also recognize that the vaccine program is truly a victim of its own success. It is because vaccines are so effective at preventing illness that we are even discussing whether or not they should be given. Because of vaccines, many parents have never seen or known of a child with polio, tetanus, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis, or even chicken pox. Such success can make us complacent about vaccinating. But such an attitude, if it becomes widespread, can only lead to tragic results.

Over the past several years many parents in Europe had chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccine after publication of one unfounded article claiming that the vaccine caused autism. The article was later rescinded, but as a result of under immunization, there have been small outbreaks of measles in Europe over the past several years. There have been recent outbreaks of measles in unvaccinated children in the United States as well.

When parents choose not to vaccinate their child, they are taking advantage of millions of others who do vaccinate their children. The immunity provided by the large population of vaccinated children decreases the likelihood that the unvaccinated child will contract these diseases. This sort of "herd immunity" only works so long as the majority of children are vaccinated. If fewer children are immunized, there is an ever greater chance for our children to become ill from vaccine preventable diseases. We must be concerned for the safety of our patients who may have a treatment or disorder that makes them more vulnerable to infections due to a weakened immune system. We cannot put them at risk because an unvaccinated child may be carrying a preventable illness into our waiting area.

We are making our parents aware of these facts to emphasize the importance of vaccinating all of our children. We will do everything we can to convince the parents, who trust us with their child's health, that vaccinating according to the routine schedule is the right thing to do. If you are determined to ignore that advice, we would prefer that you find another practice.