

The pediatricians at VIP MidSouth have recently reviewed our approach to vaccinations in our practice. 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. Unfortunately, in the past several years we have watched as there has been a steady increase in the number of parents choosing not to vaccinate, to follow their own schedule, and/or delay vaccination. At the same time, we have seen pockets of increased vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States.

An example of a recent and widespread outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease is pertussis, or whooping cough. Each year tens of thousands of cases of whooping cough occur in the United States which is evidence that we must ensure all children are vaccinated and up to date on boosters. Vaccination can decrease overall disease and protect the youngest who cannot be vaccinated.

With these issues in mind, VIP MidSouth has created a practice-wide Vaccine Policy:

- We firmly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illness and to save lives. This is the single most important health-promoting intervention we perform as health care providers and you can perform as parents or caregivers wanting to protect your children from infectious diseases.
- We firmly believe in the safety of our vaccines and that all studies have shown vaccines to be safe and effective. Vaccines have not been shown to be a cause of autism.
- We firmly believe in protecting the most vulnerable and those who cannot be vaccinated due to young age or those who have serious medical conditions. We also believe in protecting the families in our practice who do choose to vaccinate.
- Therefore, all children in our practice must be immunized within a reasonable amount of time per the childhood immunization schedules recommended by the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics. If, despite our recommendations, you absolutely refuse to vaccinate your child, we will ask you to find another healthcare provider who shares your views. We do not keep a list of such providers, nor do we recommend any such physician. Please recognize that by not vaccinating, you are putting your child at unnecessary risk for life-threatening illness and disability, and even death.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with your provider. We understand that this decision may be a very emotional one for some parents. We will do everything we can to provide education based on solid evidence, to answer your questions and to help you understand why vaccinating according to the schedule is the right thing to do. Sometimes you just need help from a reliable source to dispel the myths seen on TV or the internet.

We will allow families with children that are unvaccinated or behind on vaccines six months to catch up. We look forward to continuing to partner with you in the health of your children.