

Dear FFP Families,

In light of the recent measles outbreak and the frequent pertussis (whooping cough) outbreaks, we would like to readdress our vaccine policy at Families First Pediatrics. We have always been strong advocates for childhood vaccinations. The science is clear: vaccines are safe and they work. They have saved, and will continue to save, millions of lives every year. Many of the vaccine-preventable diseases, which terrified our grandparents, are rare today because of effective immunization programs. This creates a dangerous perception that vaccines are no longer necessary. Unfortunately, if enough people in the community don't vaccinate, the chance rises that these deadly diseases will return, as we have recently seen.

There are many who are at particularly high risk if exposed to these diseases. These include children who have medical conditions that don't allow them to be immunized, those fighting diseases such as cancer or immune system defects or children who are just too young to start immunizations. We respect parents' right to guide their child's health care. However, we feel it is very important to reiterate that if you choose not to vaccinate your children, this decision also puts our most susceptible patients at risk. These vulnerable children are your family, friends, schoolmates, church members, teammates and loved ones.

Each of us has vaccinated our own children by the same schedule we ask our patients to follow. As experts in pediatric medicine and as parents, we vaccinate because it is the safest thing to do for our children and your children. The most successful way to protect your child is to give all the vaccines at the recommended intervals. Vaccines are proven safe, do not cause autism, and protect children from debilitating and deadly diseases.

The providers at Families First Pediatrics have discussed requiring certain vaccinations in order to continue care at Families First and have decided to make it a formal policy. Our policy is effective January 1, 2016 and is as follows:

- 1. All patients older than 2 years of age need to have at least one MMR vaccine (routinely given at 1 year of age) and 3 pertussis vaccines by age 1 (DTaP or Pediarix, routinely given at 2,4 and 6 months).**
- 2. Because there is a time interval between Pertussis vaccines, exceptions will be made to patients actively complying with the policy.**

We chose to highlight the MMR and Pertussis vaccines because these are the diseases that put other children most at risk. For those families who are choosing not to vaccinate, we strongly urge you to reconsider and speak to your provider at your child's next visit. You will be protecting your child and all the children in our wonderful community.

Matthew "Toby" Cox, MD
Zachary Zarbock, MD
Barbara Bean, MD

Michael Johnson, MD
Camille Goff, NP
Christopher Cook, NP

Dallen K Ormond, NP
Tiffany Thomas, MD
Kody Crowell, MD