

The Effects of the 2019 Measles Outbreak on Immunization at Schoolhouse Pediatrics:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared measles eliminated from the United States in 2000 and now it is back. At Schoolhouse Pediatrics we believe vaccinating is one of the most important things we can do to keep children healthy and safe from infectious disease. For the protection of our patients and the community, we will no longer accept patients whose parents decline routine vaccinations unless medically contraindicated. We are happy to discuss any questions or concerns that you have about the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended vaccination schedule. We recognize the vaccination choice may be an emotional one for some families. We will do everything we can to help families understand that vaccination according to the recommended schedule is the right thing to do. In some cases, we may alter the recommended schedule to accommodate parental concerns. If you do not wish to immunize at all, we are not the right pediatric practice for you. Schoolhouse Pediatrics will continue to serve all established patients and welcome all new patients whose parents choose to immunize their children.

Vaccines are safe - rigorously tested and regularly reassessed. It is far more likely to be seriously injured by a vaccine-preventable disease than by a vaccine. Vaccines are necessary to stop the spread of 16 infectious diseases. The World Health Organization declared "vaccine hesitancy" one of the top 10 threats to global health in 2019! If we don't maintain optimum rates of immunization or "herd immunity," the diseases prevented by vaccines can and will return. Herd immunity has been compromised and parts of Texas, Washington and New York have experienced this first-hand during the Measles outbreak of 2019. Parents that do not immunize their children not only put their child at risk for serious disease but other children in the community, particularly those with underlying illness that cannot be immunized. Measles is extremely contagious. Unvaccinated children that have been exposed to the virus can prevent infection if they receive the vaccine immediately after exposure; if not, they should be quarantined a minimum of 21 days. At Schoolhouse Pediatrics we have administered double the number of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccines so far in 2019 as we did during the same period in 2018. We will continue to have plenty of vaccines available.

Most of us have not known a child with polio, tetanus, measles, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis, smallpox or chickenpox. Even fewer of us know a child that has died from one of these diseases. Clearly a false sense of security was created by the defeat of these illnesses through vaccination. Benjamin Franklin's four year old son, Franky, died from smallpox leaving his father with a lifetime of guilt and remorse for not having the boy vaccinated against smallpox which was available at the time. Roald Dahl, the beloved children's author of such hits as *The BFG*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, lost his seven year old daughter, Olivia, to measles encephalitis in 1962. Dahl subsequently became a proponent of immunization and dedicated *The BFG* to his daughter. Most of us didn't live through prior epidemics or we don't remember them. Millions of people were impacted and we don't want to see those illnesses come back. A plethora of misinformation about vaccine safety is distributed through social media. Facebook has taken several different approaches to limit information presented by anti-vax groups. Parents that are unsure about vaccine safety are encouraged to talk with our well informed and trustworthy pediatricians and nurse practitioners. Prevention of disease is at the heart of what we do in pediatrics and vaccination is the single most powerful tool that exists for infectious disease prevention.