

Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child

I am the parent/guardian of the child named at the bottom of this form. My healthcare provider has recommended that my child be vaccinated against the diseases indicated below. I have been given a copy of the Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) that explains the benefits and risks of receiving each of the vaccines recommended for my child. I have carefully reviewed and considered all of the information given to me. However, I have decided not to have my child vaccinated at this time. I have read and acknowledge the following:

- I understand that some vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g., measles, mumps, pertussis [whooping cough]) are infecting unvaccinated U.S. children, resulting in many hospitalizations and even deaths.
- I understand that though vaccination has led to a dramatic decline in the number of U.S. cases of the diseases listed below, some of these diseases are quite common in other countries and can be brought to the U.S. by international travelers. My child, if unvaccinated, could easily get one of these diseases while traveling or from a traveler.
- I understand that my unvaccinated child could spread disease to another child who is too young to be vaccinated or whose medical condition (e.g., leukemia, other forms of cancer, immune system problems) prevents them from being vaccinated. This could result in long-term complications and even death for the other child.
- I understand that if *every* parent exempted their child from vaccination, these diseases would return to our community in full force.
- I understand that my child may not be protected by “herd” or “community” immunity (i.e., the degree of protection that is the result of having most people in a population vaccinated against a disease).
- I understand that some vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis are extremely infectious and have been known to infect even the very few unvaccinated people living in highly vaccinated populations.
- I understand that if my child is not vaccinated and consequently becomes infected, he or she could experience serious consequences, such as amputation, pneumonia, hospitalization, brain damage, paralysis, meningitis, seizures, deafness, and death. Many children left intentionally unvaccinated have suffered severe health consequences from their parents’ decision not to vaccinate them.
- I understand that my child may be excluded from his or her child care facility, school, sports events, or other organized activities during disease outbreaks. This means that I could miss many days of work to stay home with my child.
- I understand that the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all clearly support preventing diseases through vaccination.

Vaccine / Disease	VIS given (✓)	Vaccine recommended by doctor or nurse (Dr./Nurse initials)	I decline this vaccine (Initials of parent/guardian)
Diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP)			
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)			
Hepatitis A (HepA)			
Hepatitis B (HepB)			
Human papillomavirus (HPV)			
Influenza			
Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)			

Vaccine / Disease	VIS given (✓)	Vaccine recommended by doctor or nurse (Dr./Nurse initials)	I decline this vaccine (Initials of parent/guardian)
Meningococcal (MCV)			
Varicella (Var)			
Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV)			
Polio, inactivated (IPV)			
Rotavirus (RV)			
Tetanus-diphtheria (Td)			
Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap)			

In signing this form, I acknowledge I am refusing to have my child vaccinated against one or more diseases listed above; I have placed my initials in the column titled “I decline this vaccine” to indicate the vaccine(s) I am declining. I understand that at any time in the future, I can change my mind and vaccinate my child.

Child’s name: _____ Date of birth: _____
 Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____
 Doctor/nurse signature: _____ Date: _____

Additional information for healthcare professionals about IAC's "Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child" form

Unfortunately, some parents will decide not to give their child some or all vaccines. For healthcare providers who want to assure that these parents fully understand the consequences of their decision, the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) has produced a new form titled "Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child." IAC's form, which accompanies this page of additional information, facilitates and documents the discussion that a healthcare professional can have with parents about the risks of not having their child immunized before the child leaves the medical setting. Your use of IAC's form demonstrates the importance you place on timely and complete vaccination, focuses the parents' attention on the unnecessary risk for which they are accepting responsibility, and may encourage a vaccine-hesitant parent to accept your recommendations. According to an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) survey on immunization practices, almost all pediatricians reported that when faced with parents who refuse vaccination they attempt to educate parents regarding the importance of immunization and document the refusal in the patient's medical record.¹

Recommendations from the child's healthcare provider about a vaccine can strongly influence parents' final vaccination decision.² Most parents trust their children's doctor for vaccine-safety information (76% endorsed "a lot of trust"), according to researchers from the University of Michigan.³ Simi-

larly, analyses of the 2009 HealthStyles Survey found that the vast majority of parents (81.7%) name their child's doctor or nurse as the most important source that helped them make decisions about vaccinating their child.⁴ Gust and colleagues found that the advice of their children's healthcare provider was the main factor in changing the minds of parents who had been reluctant to vaccinate their children or who had delayed their children's vaccinations.⁵ Vaccine-hesitant parents who felt satisfied with their pediatricians' discussion of vaccination most often chose vaccination for their child.⁶

All parents and patients should be informed about the risks and benefits of vaccination. This can be facilitated by providing the appropriate Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) for each vaccine to the parent or legal representative, which is a requirement under federal law when vaccines are to be given. When parents refuse one or more recommended immunizations, document that you provided the VIS(s), and have the parent initial and sign the vaccine refusal form. Keep the form in the patient's medical record. Revisit the immunization discussion at each subsequent appointment. Some healthcare providers may want to flag the charts of unimmunized or partially immunized children to be reminded to revisit the immunization discussion. Flagging also alerts the provider about missed immunizations when evaluating illness in children, especially in young children with fever of unknown origin.

What do others say about documentation of parental refusal to vaccinate?

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): "The use of this [AAP Refusal to Vaccinate form, available at www2.aap.org/immunization/pediatricians/refusaltovaccinate.html] or a similar form in concert with direct and non-condescending discussion can demonstrate the importance you place on appropriate immunizations, focuses parents' attention on the unnecessary risk for which they are accepting responsibility, and may in some instances induce a wavering parent to accept your recommendations."⁷

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO): "To address the risk of VPD, states should consider adopting more rigorous standards for non-medical vaccine exemptions that require parents to demonstrate that they have made a conscious, concerted, and informed decision in requesting these exemptions for their children. An example of such a standard might include a requirement for parents to complete a form that explicitly states the grounds for the exemption and requires them to acknowledge awareness of the disease-specific risks associated with not vaccinating their child(ren)."⁸

National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO): "School systems and childcare facilities (where appropriate) should use an exemption application form that requires a parental signature acknowledging their understanding that their decision not to immunize places their child and other children at risk for diseases and ensuing complications. The form should also state that in the event of an exposure to a vaccine-preventable illness, their child would be removed from school and all school-related activities for the appropriate two incubation periods beyond the date of onset of the last case, which is standard public health practice."⁹

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS): PIDS "opposes any legislation or regulation that would allow children to be exempted from mandatory immunizations based simply on their parents', or, in the case of adolescents, their own, secular personal beliefs." PIDS further recognizes that many states have or are considering adopting legislation or regulation that would allow for personal belief exemptions and outlines specific provisions to minimize use of exemptions as the "path of least resistance." One of the provisions reads as follows: "Before a child is granted an exemption,

the parents or guardians must sign a statement that delineates the basis, strength, and duration of their belief; their understanding of the risks that refusal to immunize has on their child's health and the health of others (including the potential for serious illness or death); and their acknowledgment that they are making the decision not to vaccinate on behalf of their child."¹⁰

References

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Need help responding to vaccine-hesitant parents?

Science-based materials are available from these respected organizations

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

Healthcare providers can find numerous resources on the AAP's website to help with parents and caregivers who have questions about vaccinating their child at www2.aap.org/immunization/families/deciding.html. When parents cannot be convinced, consider using AAP's Refusal to Vaccinate form at www2.aap.org/immunization/pediatricians/pdf/RefusaltoVaccinate.pdf.

California Immunization Coalition

The California Immunization Coalition (CIC) has developed several excellent provider pieces that discuss common questions many parents may have regarding vaccines for their children. These include

- "Responding to Parents' Top 10 Concerns" www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/IMM-917.pdf
- "Talking with Parents About Vaccine Safety" www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/IMM-915.pdf
- "Alternate Vaccine Schedules: Helping Parents Separate Fact From Fear" <http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-988.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Among CDC's many online immunization resources is the "Parent's Guide to Childhood Immunization," a 64-page booklet that can be ordered or printed at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/parents-guide. In addition, visit CDC's "Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents" web section at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/index.html

Other CDC materials, designed to help healthcare providers work with hesitant parents, include the following:

- "If You Choose Not to Vaccinate Your Child, Understand the Risks and Responsibilities" www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/not-vacc-risks-color-office.pdf
- "Infant Immunizations FAQs" www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/parent-questions.html
- "Talking with Parents about Vaccines for Infants" www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/talk-infants-color-office.pdf

Every Child by Two (ECBT)

Created by Every Child by Two, www.vaccinateyourbaby.org focuses on answering parents' commonly asked questions about vaccines. It features video clips and links to current vaccine news stories.

Immunization Action Coalition (IAC)

IAC's Talking about Vaccines web section provides healthcare professionals with top vaccination resources from trusted sources such as CDC, AAP, IAC, VEC, and many more. Visit www.immunize.org/concerns. Refer parents to IAC's website for the public at www.vaccineinformation.org

IAC has developed several patient handouts for vaccine-hesitant parents. These include:

- "Clear Answers & Smart Advice About Your Baby's Shots," an excerpt

from the popular book "Baby 411" by Dr. Ari Brown. www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2068.pdf

- "Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child" www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4059.pdf
- "Reliable Sources of Immunization Information: Where to go to find answers!" www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4012.pdf
- "Vaccines Work!" www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4037.pdf

Institute for Vaccine Safety, Johns Hopkins University

The Institute for Vaccine Safety collects vaccine-specific safety information. Of particular interest is its "Components of Vaccines" section, which contains tables specifying the contents of various vaccines: www.vaccinesafety.edu/components.htm.

Vaccine Education Center (VEC) Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

VEC offers handouts in English and Spanish as well as four colorful booklets covering immunization of infants, teens, and adults, as well as one about vaccine safety. These educational materials can be downloaded at www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/order-educational-materials/order-educational-materials.html. VEC has developed a number of patient handouts covering vaccine topics of interest. These include the following

- "Too Many Vaccines? What you should know" at: www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/too-many-vaccines.pdf
- "Vaccine Ingredients: What you should know" at: www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients.pdf

For parents with concerns about vaccines and autism

AAP has issued a statement that can be printed at www2.aap.org/advocacy/releases/autismparentfacts.htm. Parents may wish to investigate further at www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/developmental-disabilities/Pages/Autism-Spectrum-Disorders.aspx. IAC also recommends these books:

- *Autism's False Prophets: Bad Science, Risky Medicine, and the Search for a Cure*, by Paul A. Offit, MD
- *Unstrange Minds: Remapping the World of Autism*, by Roy Richard Grinker, PhD

And, here are three well-researched handouts from IAC and one from VEC:

- "MMR Vaccine Does Not Cause Autism: Examine the Evidence!" www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4026.pdf
- "Evidence shows vaccines unrelated to autism" www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4028.pdf
- "Vaccines and Autism: What you should know" www.chop.edu/export/download/pdfs/articles/vaccine-education-center/autism.pdf