

ARC Pediatric Vaccination Policy Change

We respectfully ask all ARC families to review our new pediatric vaccination policy.

ARC pediatricians and family physicians have always endeavored to be good partners with our patients and families. We strive to make the right decisions for your children's health. We bring our medical expertise and you bring your daily experience with your children to these decisions. Even when we do not fully agree on the best approach, we want to maintain mutual respect - knowing we have the same goal: healthy kids and cohesive families.

We have written this letter to let you know that ARC is in the process of changing its vaccination policy and to explain our decision. Our goal is to be certain that our facilities are safe for all of our patients which includes over 400,000 infants, children, adolescents, adults, and seniors with a broad range of healthcare conditions.

The recent outbreak of measles starting with one case in California (Disneyland) led to over 100 cases in at least seven states. This event reemphasized for us how easily measles and other dangerous vaccine-preventable illnesses can spread and how important it is to us as physicians that we maintain safe facilities for all of our patients. After extensive and soul-searching discussions the physicians at ARC concluded that our previous approach to vaccinations needed to be updated and revised so our clinics will not pose health risks for our most vulnerable patients, such as infants who have not yet had the full range of vaccinations, frail seniors, pregnant women and the many individuals with conditions that can compromise their immune systems. Combining a vulnerable population with declining immunization rates could have far-reaching consequences.

Therefore, Austin Regional Clinic pediatricians and family medicine physicians have decided that as of July 1, 2015, our physicians will no longer accept new children whose parents won't permit vaccination. This is a very hard decision for us, but our primary concern is the safety of all our patients. In addition, our physicians will be asking our current families with unvaccinated children to talk about their immunization concerns and strongly encourage them to begin to implement the CDC vaccination catch-up schedule.

ARC physicians support immunization. And while we respect and honor the right of families to choose to defer vaccinations for their children, we feel that we must make this change to our policy for the good of all. To those parents who have deferred vaccinations, we will ask for your thoughtful consideration in meeting with us to discuss your concerns and begin the CDC vaccination catch-up schedule, either at your child's next well child exam or at a separate visit, whichever is most convenient.

We would like to keep you in our ARC family and understand that there are unique aspects in each case. For that reason, it is best to talk directly to your pediatrician or family medicine physician. Catch-up schedules are often complicated, but your child's doctor is dedicated to protecting your child and can explain the schedule completely.

We understand that our new policy will not be acceptable for some families. We have longstanding and trusting relationships and hope that won't be the case. But should it be the case, no fees will be imposed for records transfer.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to all parents who have entrusted the care of your children to us. We have tremendous respect for the hard and emotionally difficult work that is parenting. It is our privilege to be on your team and we would be happy to discuss this further with you at your next visit.