



Requests for non-standard vaccine schedules for children

Giving immunizations to our pediatric patients is an important way to help protect them from serious illnesses. At the University of Michigan Health Centers we give the vaccines on a schedule that has been developed by experts on infectious diseases, the immune system, and public health. The schedules are published every year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, after careful study and research. When we follow the standard schedule, we can be confident that our patients will be protected at the ages when they are most at risk for serious disease from vaccine preventable infections.

Sometimes parents have heard or read information that makes them concerned about following the standard schedule. They ask for changes to be made in the timing of vaccines. Following the standard schedule is the SAFEST way to protect children against diseases that can be prevented with vaccines.

- Delaying the start of vaccines or spreading them out over a longer time leaves children unprotected at ages when they are most at risk of the diseases.
- The standard schedule has been tested to work with a child's developing immune system at specific ages.
- No research has been done on non-standard schedules to demonstrate that a child would be equally protected.
- The standard schedule includes vaccines that have been tested to be given safely at the same time.
- There is no research to show that a non-standard schedule is safe.
- Vaccines given at the same time do not overload the child's immune system. An infant is exposed to over 2000 antigens (substances that trigger a response from the immune system) in a day through eating, playing and interacting with others. There are 150 antigens in the entire childhood vaccination schedule.

There are rare instances when health care providers should depart from the recommended childhood schedule because of a child's medical condition (e.g., severe illness or immune suppression). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gives us guidance for those rare circumstances.

The following links are provided for further information:

1. "The problem with Dr. Bob's Alternative Vaccine Schedule"
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/123/1/e164>
2. Frequently Asked Questions about Multiple Vaccinations and the Immune System
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/multiplevaccines.html>
3. Facts for Parents About Vaccine Safety
http://www.autismtruths.org/pdf/Factsforparentsaboutautismandvaccinesafety_AAP.pdf

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