

# 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, such as leukemia, other forms of cancer, or 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 unvaccinated 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 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 severe pneumonia, hospitalization, brain damage, paralysis, meningitis, loss of limbs, seizures, deafness, and death. Many children left intentionally unvaccinated have suffered severe health consequences as a result of 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 recommend 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)			
Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)			
Hepatitis A (HepA)			
Hepatitis B (HepB)			
Human papillomavirus (HPV)			
Influenza			
Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)			
Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY)			
Meningococcal B (MenB)			
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 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.<sup>1</sup>

Recommendations from the child's healthcare provider about a vaccine can strongly influence a parent's final vaccination decision.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> Vaccine-hesitant parents who felt satisfied with their pediatricians' discussion of vaccination most often chose vaccination for their child.<sup>6</sup>

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 vaccines, 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 [www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/immunization\\_refusaltovaccinate.pdf](http://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/immunization_refusaltovaccinate.pdf)] 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."<sup>7</sup>

**Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO):** "To address the risk of VPD [vaccine-preventable disease], 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)."<sup>8</sup>

**National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO):** NACCHO encourages various steps be taken to limit non-medical exemp-

tions to state-required vaccinations, including the use of an exemption form that acknowledge the risks involved in refusing vaccinations and that in the event of an exposure to a vaccine-preventable illness, the 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. In addition, NACCHO policy encourages use of exemption forms that require documentation from a medical provider regarding the refusal to vaccinate and consultation pertaining to risks."<sup>9</sup>

**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 acknowledgement that they are making the decision not to vaccinate on behalf of their child."<sup>10</sup>

### REFERENCES

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