

**American Association of Naturopathic Physicians
DRAFT Position Paper on Vaccinations**

Overview of Naturopathic Medicine and Vaccination:

Vaccines have an international public health impact by significantly reducing morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Vaccines are a scientifically sound and effective modality,¹ and are used by naturopathic physicians for the prevention of infectious diseases.

Public health workers are natural allies of the naturopathic profession and vice versa, with large overlaps in objectives and methods of supporting and maintaining health.

Naturopathic physicians understand that the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases would increase if current vaccination programs were not followed.

Naturopathic physicians are strong advocates of preventive medicine and protecting children and adults from adverse consequences of infectious disease, and vaccination is included under the naturopathic precept of *Prevention*.

Naturopathic physicians are morally obliged and legally mandated to carry out public health laws including those with respect to vaccination.

Vaccination contributes to less utilization of medications and invasive treatments for complications of vaccine-preventable diseases, and is supported by the naturopathic profession's precept of *First Do No Harm*.

The AANP Scientific Affairs Committee has reviewed vaccine research and concluded that the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended vaccination schedule is based on sound science and should serve as the main guidance on vaccine administration.

It is well documented that communities with lower rates of vaccination may suffer outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, including significant morbidity and mortality.²³⁴⁵

The naturopathic precept of *Doctor as Teacher* directs naturopathic physicians to provide unbiased, complete information to patients and/or parents about vaccinations.

There is currently no definitive evidence supporting any particular alternative vaccination schedule.⁶ More than ten percent of families may be using alternative vaccination schedules.⁷ It would be preferable to follow an alternative vaccination schedule rather than avoid vaccinations altogether.

Many families are removed from or refused entry to medical practices due to their vaccination hesitation, resistance, or requests for an alternative vaccination schedule, and they therefore may seek out naturopathic physicians for care and vaccine guidance. This situation places naturopathic physicians in an opportune position to provide information and vaccine coverage to those patients who might otherwise receive no vaccines at all.

Additional measures should also be recommended to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable disease including healthy diet, regular exercise, routine hand washing, optimizing immune function, and breast-feeding.

Position of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians:

- The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians takes a clear pro-vaccination position, with the understanding that there may be differences of opinion and dissent in both naturopathic and conventional medical communities and recommends that naturopathic physicians know, understand, and follow the vaccination guidelines appropriate for the individual patient, and consistent with immunization regulations of local, state and federal jurisdictions.
- Patients should have access to vaccinations by naturopathic physicians in the states and territories where they are regulated. To fully participate in public health efforts, naturopathic physicians should have full access to public health vaccination programs.
- Naturopathic physicians should recommend, provide, or refer for appropriate vaccinations for patients according to CDC's vaccination schedule or catch-up schedule.
- Naturopathic physicians have a responsibility to contribute to research that provides impartial data in regards to vaccination.
- Naturopathic physicians should follow generally accepted storage and administration guidelines for vaccines. Before vaccinations are administered, the necessary vaccine information statements should be provided to and discussed with the patient or parents, and the physician should participate in state-specific Immunization Information Systems.
- Naturopathic physicians should provide a copy of the official CDC vaccination schedule and standard written informed consent for the patient or parent to sign, stating that they understand the risks if there is variance from the CDC's vaccination schedule. If a patient receives vaccinations outside the medical home, necessary details should be accurately recorded for those vaccines in order to track a patient's vaccination status in accordance with state laws.
- Naturopathic physicians who have patients with symptoms that are believed to be due to vaccine adverse effects have a duty to report this to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

¹ National Research Council. The Childhood Immunization Schedule and Safety: Stakeholder Concerns, Scientific Evidence, and Future Studies. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2013.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccination coverage among children in kindergarten--United States, 2011-12 school year. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. August 24, 2012 / 61(33);647-652.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Poliovirus Infections in Four Unvaccinated Children --- Minnesota, August--October 2005. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. October 21, 2005 / 54(41);1053-1055.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Varicella Death of an Unvaccinated, Previously Healthy Adolescent. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. April 12, 2013 / 62(14);261-263.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pertussis Deaths--United States, 2000. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. July 19, 2002 / 51(28);616-618.

⁶ Jackson ML. Challenges in comparing the safety of different vaccination schedules. Vaccine. 2013 Apr 19;31(17):2126-9.

⁷ Dempsey AF, Schaffer S, Singer D, Butchart A, Davis M, Freed GL. Alternative vaccination schedule preferences among parents of young children. Pediatrics. 2011 Nov;128(5):848-56.).

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