



THOMAS CHITTENDEN HEALTH CENTER

Vaccine Policy Statement

At **Thomas Chittenden Health Center**, we strongly support routine childhood and adult immunizations as recommended by the **Vermont Department of Health** and aligned with guidance from leading medical and public health organizations. Vaccination is one of the most effective, safe, and well-studied medical interventions in modern history and is a cornerstone of preventive family medicine.

Our Commitment to Evidence-Based Care

Recommended vaccines and the established immunization schedule are the result of **decades of rigorous scientific research, ongoing data collection, and continuous safety monitoring**. These recommendations are based on evidence gathered from **millions of children and adults worldwide**, studied over many years by **thousands of highly trained scientists, physicians, epidemiologists, and public health experts**. Vaccines are not approved or recommended lightly; they undergo extensive testing before approval and are continually monitored after licensure to ensure ongoing safety and effectiveness.

Why Vaccinate Your Child?

Vaccines protect children from serious, potentially life-threatening diseases such as measles, whooping cough, polio, meningitis, and influenza. Many of these diseases are now uncommon precisely because vaccines have been so successful—but they have not disappeared. When vaccination rates decline, outbreaks return, placing infants, immunocompromised individuals, and vulnerable community members at risk.

By vaccinating your child, you are:

- Protecting them during their most vulnerable stages of development
- Preventing severe illness, hospitalization, disability, and death
- Helping protect others through community (herd) immunity

Why Follow the Recommended Vaccine Schedule?

The vaccine schedule is carefully designed to provide protection **at the earliest and safest time**, when children are most at risk for serious complications from infectious diseases. It is not arbitrary. The timing and spacing of vaccines are based on how a child's immune system develops and responds best.

Delaying or spreading out vaccines:

- Leaves children unprotected for longer periods
- Has **no proven safety benefit**
- Can increase the risk of disease and complications

Following the recommended schedule ensures timely, effective, and safe immunity.

Vaccine Safety

Vaccines are among the **most closely monitored medical products** in use today. Serious side effects are extremely rare. Most vaccine reactions are mild and temporary, such as soreness at the injection site or a low-grade fever. Extensive research has shown that vaccines **do not cause autism** and do not overwhelm the immune system.

In contrast, the diseases vaccines prevent carry real and significant risks, including pneumonia, brain injury, paralysis, infertility, and death. The risks of vaccination are far lower than the risks of the diseases they prevent.

The Risk of Not Vaccinating

Choosing not to vaccinate places your child and others at increased risk. Unvaccinated children are more likely to contract and spread preventable diseases, leading to outbreaks that can affect schools, childcare settings, and the broader community. These outbreaks disproportionately harm infants, elderly individuals, and patients with weakened immune systems who cannot be fully protected by vaccines themselves.

Our Practice Policy

As a family practice committed to evidence-based, preventive care, **Thomas Chittenden Health Center strongly recommends that all patients follow the Vermont Department of Health immunization schedule** unless a valid medical contraindication exists. We welcome respectful, open conversations and are committed to answering questions and addressing concerns with compassion and scientific clarity.

Patients seeking additional, reliable information about vaccines may visit **immunize.org** or **healthvermont.gov/disease-control/immunizations**.

Vaccination is not only a personal health decision—it is a community responsibility. We are proud to partner with families in keeping our patients and our Vermont communities healthy and safe.