



UNC Family Medicine Patient Newsletter

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Update from Dr. Karen Halpert, Senior Medical Director of Clinical Services



Our clinics have come a long way in the past year. We have almost seamlessly adapted virtual care into our everyday routine. We have also increased our in-person access so patients can feel comfortable coming back to our clinic sites. Our patients can feel safe coming back to clinic and we strongly encourage everyone who has been avoiding routine care to schedule an in-person or virtual visit with us! We want to reassure everyone that the safest standards of care are being followed. As children start to go back to in-person classes, we want to ensure caregivers feel comfortable that our clinic staff is doing the best we can to move everyone through the visit safely and quickly! We now have direct rooming with no waiting time in the waiting room. We have our two new clinics (Durham and Carraway) continuing to see new patients with the availability of sports medicine services at our Durham Clinic. Overall, our clinics have done a tremendous job adapting to the pandemic and we look forward to continuing to provide high-quality, personalized care!

Vaccinated? Great! Here's What You Need to Know

We have finally reached the point where COVID vaccines are widely available to everyone aged 16 and older, which is incredible news! Many of you may have already received your

vaccination or are in the process of completing it. Here are some key guidelines to know from the CDC about what is or isn't safe to do once you are vaccinated:

- Vaccinated people can gather safely with other fully vaccinated people.
- Vaccinated people do not need to quarantine after a possible COVID exposure, as long as they are not showing symptoms.
- You should continue wearing your mask in public. This is to protect everyone regardless of vaccination status, until we have more data on how effective the vaccines are at preventing infection and spread of COVID.



Welcome Our New Pharmacist!



We are pleased to introduce Deborah Sturpe, PharmD, MA, BCPS, our newest clinical pharmacist. Deborah is a graduate of the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy and spent 12 years as a faculty member at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy and another 4+ years at the University of New England College of Pharmacy before returning to NC in late 2019. She has practiced in ambulatory care pharmacy practice as well as hospital and

community practice. She especially enjoys helping with drug therapy needs related to women's health conditions, osteoporosis, and anticoagulation. Call the clinic today to learn more about how our pharmacists can assist with your care!

Is Your Insurance Up to Date?

Keeping your insurance coverage information up to date in your UNC account will save time in the long run. Up to date insurance on file not only expedites appointment scheduling but also eases prior authorization processing, which is needed for referrals and many prescription refills. So check your insurance. Many plans changed at the start of 2021, so a double check to make sure you know your coverage is a smart choice. You can update your coverage information in My UNC Chart <https://myuncchart.org/> or by calling UNC Family Medicine at [984-974-0210](tel:984-974-0210) and pressing 2 to speak to a scheduling staff member who will be happy to assist.

A Note on Advanced Care Planning

Have you spoken with your doctor about advanced care planning? A key part of being prepared for any type of health situation is having a designated decision maker who is familiar with your wishes when it comes to your care. It's important to notify our clinical team of who that person is. We can schedule time to talk with you and your family members specifically about advanced care planning and answer any questions you or they may have. Call today to request this type of appointment.

Let's Talk Health with Dr. Neutze: Childhood Vaccinations

In the midst of the pandemic and the excitement over the arrival of COVID vaccines, it may feel easy to forget the fact that there are still many other infectious diseases out there! Thankfully in most cases we have longstanding, highly effective vaccines to fight those illnesses too. Vaccines have been around for over 200 years, and since then, there have been dramatic decreases in deaths and disabilities from diseases such as measles, polio, tetanus, pneumonia, and whooping cough, to name a few. We give the majority of vaccines to children, the most vulnerable, in order to protect them against these diseases.

Keeping your child up to date with their vaccines is as important as choosing the foods they eat and the medicines they take to keep them healthy. It is especially important as children begin returning to in-person learning that they are caught up on their immunizations.

We understand that families may still have questions about various vaccines. Some of the common questions and concerns we hear are:

- **Why does my child need so many vaccines?** The body slowly builds immunity to disease with vaccines. Some of the vaccines work best by giving repeated doses every couple of months. The American Association of Pediatrics has carefully designed a [vaccine schedule](#) that will protect your child the best.
- **Those diseases don't even exist anymore—why do I need to vaccinate my child?** It's easy to feel like polio and the measles are yesterday's problem. But these diseases are not gone—they are only under control because of vaccinations. Even today, there are measles outbreaks that happen when vaccination levels fall within a community.

- **I've heard vaccines cause autism in children.** No scientific study or data has been able to support this connection—period. [For more information, read here.](#)
- **Is there a vaccine that can protect against cancer?** Yes! There are actually two. Both the hepatitis B and human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines can prevent certain cancers. Even though the risk of cancer doesn't develop until later in life, we recommend getting these vaccines as a child when they can have the most protective effect.

As a parent, we make so many choices for our kids — from diaper brand, to diet, to type of daycare, to how we teach our children about the world they live in. With so much conflicting information available, these choices can be difficult. It's natural to feel uncertain as you try to make the best choices for your child. Luckily, there is one choice that is easy, safe, and protects all of us: vaccinations.

If you are still unsure about vaccination, talk to your primary care provider. Your provider can help talk you through your concerns. Below are some additional resources with information about vaccinations, discussing your concerns with your provider, and recommended vaccination schedules.

Additional Resources about Vaccinations:

- [AAP Vaccination Schedule - redbook.solutions.aap.org](http://redbook.solutions.aap.org)
- [Information about Vaccines - healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)
- [Talking to your doctor about vaccinations - aap.org](http://aap.org)



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