Common Misconceptions Surrounding Vaccines

- **Diseases had already begun to disappear before vaccines were introduced because of better hygiene and sanitation.** Not true- The Soviet Union is a good example of this. From 1989-1994 low primary vaccination numbers and lack of boosters resulted in a jump of 839 cases of diphtheria in 1989 to nearly 50,000 cases and 1,700 deaths in 1994.

- **The majority of people who get diseases have been vaccinated.** Not true- measles for example is 98% effective and other vaccines are effective for 85-95% of children vaccinated. Some just don’t develop appropriate immunity.

- **There are “hot lots” of vaccines that parents should find and avoid.** Again, misleading. Just because an “adverse” reaction (which could be as simple as a sore arm or a fever) has been reported doesn’t mean the “batch lot” is bad. The VAERS report does not differentiate what reaction occurred.

- **Vaccines cause harmful side-effects and may have long lasting effects we don’t even know about.** Vaccines are safe and the risk of death or harmful injury is “extraordinarily low” according to the Institute of Medicine report in 1994. Recent reports have shown that autism rates have increased despite removal of the preservative originally blamed on the illness.

- **DTaP and SIDS.** The institute of Medicine concluded that “the evidence does not indicate a causal relation between [DTaP] vaccine and SIDS.”

- **Vaccines have virtually eliminated diseases in the US so there isn’t any need to put my child through the vaccination process.** Not a good idea. Traveling can put you at risk and the numbers of people immigrating to the US also expose us continuously to the same illnesses our vaccines protect us from. A few years ago a 63 year old US traveler to Haiti caught diphtheria and he died- he had never been vaccinated.

- **Giving a child multiple vaccinations for different diseases at the same time increases the risk of harmful side effects.** If you consider the amount of foreign antigens that our children are exposed to and take in every day, adding a few more with vaccines will not overload the average immune system. Extensive studies done by the ACIP and the AAP show multiple vaccines are safe and less traumatic to the child.

**Content of this handout adapted from Some Common Misconceptions about vaccination and how to respond to them from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at:** [http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/6mishome.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/6mishome.htm).