
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Immunizing Kids Against Disease



**March
2019**

INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

Every year, children die from diseases that could be prevented through immunizations. In recent years, rates of non-vaccination are going up due to fears about vaccine safety or simple forgetfulness. Health experts want parents to know that today's vaccines are rigorously tested for safety, and getting children vaccinated will protect their children and people in vulnerable populations who can't be vaccinated because of age or illness.

State requirements

All states require immunizations for students who attend public schools. Immunization mandates began in the 1800s with the development and success of a vaccine for smallpox. Since that time, courts have weighed in repeatedly on questions about individual liberties versus public health, and they have upheld requirements for vaccinations that contribute to the community's health and wellbeing.

Exemptions exist and vary by state based on philosophical, religious and/or medical objections. See a list of vaccine requirements for each state at www.nvic.org/Vaccine-Laws/state-vaccine-requirements.aspx

Opposition to vaccines

Some parents oppose vaccinations based on safety fears. One widespread fear is that vaccines cause autism. This worry grew out of a now debunked study from 1998. The connection has been disproven in multiple follow-up scientific studies, and the original study is considered a fraud or a hoax by many in the medical community. See the following links for more information:

- **Do Vaccines Cause Autism?**

www.webmd.com/brain/autism/do-vaccines-cause-autism#1.

- **Autism/MMR Vaccine Study Faked: FAQ**

www.webmd.com/brain/autism/news/20110105/bmj-wakefield-autism-faq#1

- **Retracted autism study an 'elaborate fraud,' British journal finds**

www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/01/05/autism.vaccines/index.html

Current health risk: Measles

Immunizations have eradicated smallpox and have made gains in eradicating many others, including measles, polio, mumps and rubella. Now, as more parents choose not to vaccinate, some diseases are making a comeback. The current measles outbreak in several states is a good example. "Less than 20 years ago, health experts thought it was only a matter of time before measles was completely eradicated in the United States. But over the past 15 years, the disease has gained a new

(Over)

foothold as more parents choose not to vaccinate their children. www.webmd.com/children/vaccines/news/20171003/measles-making-a-comeback-in-the-united-states#1

So far this year, nine states have reported cases of measles. Outbreaks in Oregon and Washington have tallied 37 cases, the highest number since 1996. New York reported 209 cases since October.

Measles is a contagious and deadly disease that spreads through air via coughing and sneezing. It kills one or two children out of every 1,000 children who get it. Unvaccinated children in communities with outbreaks are excluded from public schools as a precaution, sometimes for months. Read more in the CDC measles fact sheet for parents, <http://bit.ly/2D9r9dt>.

Five important reasons to vaccinate your child

From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.vaccines.gov/getting_for_parents/five_reasons/index.html

- 1 Immunizations can save your child's life.** Some diseases that once injured or killed thousands of children, have been eliminated completely and others are close to extinction because of effective vaccines.
- 2. Vaccination is very safe and effective.** Vaccines are only given to children after a long and careful review by scientists, doctors, and healthcare professionals. Vaccines will involve some discomfort and may cause pain, redness, or tenderness at the site of injection, but this is minimal compared to the diseases these vaccines prevent. Serious side effects, such as severe allergic reaction, are very rare.
- 3. Immunization protects others you care about.** Children in the U.S. still get vaccine-preventable diseases. Since 2010, there have been between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough each year in the United States and about 10 to 20 babies, many of which were too young to be fully vaccinated, died each year. While some babies are too young to be protected by vaccination, others may not be able to receive certain vaccinations due to severe allergies, weakened immune systems from conditions like leukemia, or other reasons. To help keep them safe, it is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized.
- 4. Immunizations can save your family time and money.** A child with a vaccine-preventable disease can be denied attendance at schools or child care facilities. Some vaccine-preventable diseases can result in prolonged disabilities and can take a financial toll because of lost time at work, medical bills or long-term disability care.
- 5. Immunization protects future generations.** Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, eliminated many diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide. Your children don't have to get smallpox shots anymore because the disease no longer exists. By vaccinating children against rubella (German measles), the risk that pregnant women will pass this virus on to their fetus or newborn has been dramatically decreased, and birth defects associated with that virus no longer are seen in the United States. If we continue vaccinating, some diseases of today will no longer be around to harm children in the future.