

Addressing Concerns about Measles Vaccination

Measles is a vaccine-preventable disease. This means a vaccine can prevent people from getting and spreading this disease. The best defense against future outbreaks (more cases than usual) of vaccine-preventable disease is to keep vaccination rates high in Los Angeles County.

1. Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Most vaccines come with mild side effects, such as fever or soreness around the injection site. More serious side effects are very rare. You are much more likely to have serious health problems from the disease, than from the vaccine.

2. Do vaccines cause autism?

No. There is no proof that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) or other vaccines cause autism. In 1998, Dr. Andrew Wakefield wrote a research paper in a medical publication called the Lancet. In this paper, Dr. Wakefield claimed there was a link between vaccines and autism. By 2010, the Lancet found no valid proof of his claim. What they did find was that Dr. Wakefield was paid more than \$665,000 by lawyers who wanted to show that the MMR vaccine was unsafe.

Also, there is no proof that thimerosal (a preservative in some vaccines) leads to autism. But to address parents' concerns, thimerosal was removed or decreased to very low levels in all childhood vaccines except for one type of flu vaccine in 2001. Not all flu vaccines have thimerosal.

3. Are vaccines effective?

Yes. We don't see many diseases in the U.S. because vaccines are so effective. For example, smallpox was eliminated around the world in 1977. We haven't seen polio in the U.S. since 1979. Measles was eliminated in the U.S. in 2000. But as we've seen recently, vaccine-preventable diseases can spread easily when unvaccinated travelers bring the virus from other countries into the U.S.

There is a small chance that vaccinated people can get sick during an outbreak since no vaccine is 100% effective. But, we would see much more disease than we currently do without high vaccination rates.



Key Points:

- Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting and spreading many diseases, like measles.
- Vaccination is safe and effective.
- Vaccination protects you and your community from serious diseases.
- The best defense against future outbreaks is to keep vaccination rates high in Los Angeles County.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/measles/index.htm>

California Department of
Public Health
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/measles.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

CDCP-IP-0017-01 (4/22/2019)

4. How do vaccines help prevent disease in individuals and communities?

Getting our vaccines keeps us from getting and spreading disease that we can prevent. Also, getting our vaccines helps protect people who can't be vaccinated for health reasons. Anyone who is not vaccinated is at greater risk of getting sick, such as babies that are too young to vaccinate, people with weak immune systems, and people with fatal allergies to the vaccine. When more people aren't vaccinated, the level of community protection drops and the chance of an outbreak rises.

5. What is the Department of Public Health doing to promote vaccination?

The LA County Department of Public Health works to promote vaccines by:

- Helping the public make informed decisions about vaccines through campaigns like Preteen Vaccine Week celebrated every February
- Providing materials, training, and advice to immunization providers to ensure that vaccines are safe, effective, and given to the right patient at the right time
- Helping schools and childcare centers follow school immunization laws and educating students and parents about these laws
- Tracking and reporting the number of vaccine-preventable diseases to quickly find and respond to cases and stop their spread

6. Where can you go to get vaccinated?

Call your doctor to get an MMR vaccine, which may be covered by your insurance. You may also be vaccinated at a pharmacy or at a clinic offering no or low-cost vaccinations. Call 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip to find a nearby clinic.

Want to learn more about vaccination?

Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health, Immunization Program

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/index.htm>

Immunization levels in California schools and daycares

California Department of Public Health

<http://www.shotsforschool.org/>

List of recommended vaccines by age

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/vaccines-age.html>

