

CAPITOL RESEARCH

HEALTH POLICY

VACCINE RATES FOR MEASLES DECLINE AS EXEMPTIONS GROW

Who would have believed that a holiday trip to California's Disneyland could lead to the sudden spread of measles, a disease formerly believed to have been nearly eradicated? The new outbreak of measles—reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to have infected 121 people in 17 states and the District of Columbia between Jan. 1 and Feb. 6, 2015¹—has brought the topic of vaccinations into the public eye and become one of the top political discussions of the day.

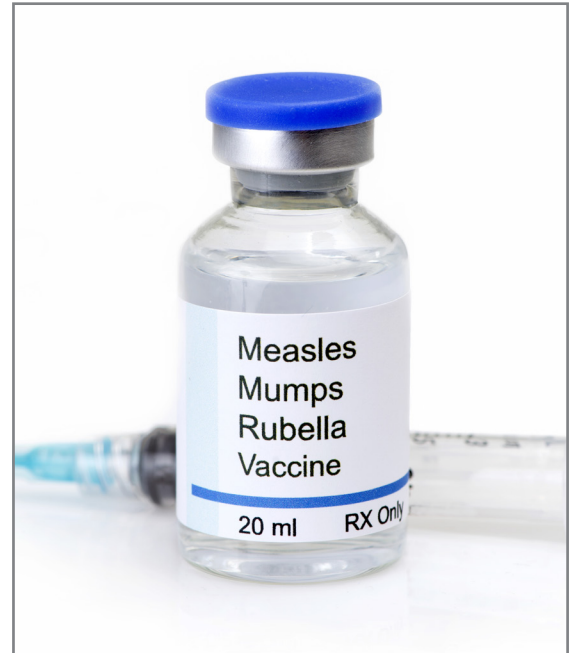
Recommended Measles Vaccination Schedule

The first vaccination for measles—which is packaged along with mumps and rubella, leading to the shorthand name of MMR—is recommended for children between 12- and 18-months-old. A second dose of the MMR vaccine is given to children before they enter school, between ages 4 and 6.

State Vaccination Rates

The CDC each year releases statistics on MMR vaccination coverage among children in kindergarten². Among the most recent findings:

- The national median rate of 94.7 percent for the 2013-14 school year is approaching the Healthy People 2020 goal of 95 percent MMR vaccination coverage, but rates among states vary significantly.
- Only 24 states have kindergarten immunization rates of 95 percent or more.
- In seven states—Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, North Dakota and Pennsylvania—and the District of Columbia, the immunization rate is below 90 percent.
- Immunization rates are between 90 and 95 percent in 19 states.
- In the four territories where rates are calculated, Guam is below 90 percent; Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are between 90 and 95 percent; and the Northern Mariana Islands rate is 96 percent.
- In contrast to the current MMR immunization rate, the national rate reported by CDC for the 1999-2000 school year—97.4 percent—was higher.

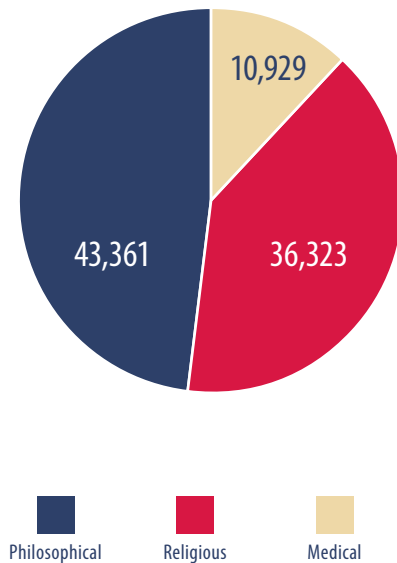


Exemptions from MMR Vaccination

State laws provide ways for parents to exempt their children from vaccination requirements.

- CDC data show 90,613 children entering school in the 2013-14 school year were exempted from the MMR vaccination³.
- California led the nation with 18,270 MMR vaccine exemptions in the 2013-14 school year.
- Nationally, just 12 percent of MMR exemptions were for medical reasons.
- All states allow exemptions from vaccine requirements for medical reasons. For children with cancer and other serious medical conditions, physicians may recommend against vaccination at the scheduled age.
- Nearly half of all exemptions from the MMR vaccine in the 2013-14 school year nationally—48 percent—were for philosophical reasons or personal belief. Another 40 percent of exemptions were for religious reasons. Nonmedical exemptions are allowed for religious reasons in 46 states.

90,613 Kindergartners Exempted from MMR Vaccination, 2013-14 School Year



- Exemptions also are allowed for philosophic reasons and personal beliefs in 18 states.
- Mississippi and West Virginia are the only states that do not allow exemptions for any reason other than medical conditions.

States Revisit Exemption Laws

Some states with lower rates of vaccine coverage have begun to re-examine their laws on parental exemptions and tighten the requirements.

- Despite the total discrediting and eventual retraction of a 1998 article published in *The Lancet* that linked the MMR vaccine to autism, some parents still believe the link exists. Some national politicians appeared to give credence to that belief in public statements after the newest measles outbreak in early 2015.
- California legislators are currently considering SB 277 to eliminate the personal belief exemption in its school vaccination requirements. In 2012, the state made the personal belief exemption more restrictive. Effective Jan. 1, 2014, parents, guardians or emancipated minors must obtain the signature of their health care practitioner to obtain the exemption.
- In Colorado, a bill (SB 77) is advancing in the 2015 legislative session guaranteeing parents' rights to make medical decisions concerning their children. The proposal would reinforce the state's existing personal belief exemption for vaccinations.
- Pennsylvania legislators have announced plans to introduce bipartisan legislation to eliminate the state's existing philosophical exemption. House co-sponsor Rep. Becky Corbin, a pharmaceutical chemist, notes that Pennsylvania has one of the lowest immunization rates in the nation, and that the philosophical exemption was the most commonly used.



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REFERNECES

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Measles Cases and Outbreaks." <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>. Accessed February 12, 2015.

² Rane Seither, et al. "Vaccination Coverage Among Children in Kindergarten – United States, 2013–14 School Year," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *MMWR*, October 17, 2014/63(41):913–920. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6341a1.htm>

³ *Ibid.*

MMR VACCINE COVERAGE FOR KINDERGARTNERS

State	MMR Estimated Vaccination Coverage Rate (%) 2013-14	Exemptions Allowed under Law	Percent Exempt from Vaccination					
			School Year 2013-14				School Year 2011-12	Percentage Point Difference
			Medical Reasons	Nonmedical Reasons: Religious and Philosophical	Total % Exempted	Total Number Exempted	Total % Exempted	
Alabama	≥92.0	Medical, Religious	<0.1	0.6	0.7	517	0.6	0.1
Alaska	94.4	Medical, Religious	1.2	4.1	5.3	539	7	-1.7
Arizona	93.9	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.2	4.7	4.9	4,370	3.7	1.2
Arkansas	86.5	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	<0.1	1.1	1.2	493	0.9	0.3
California	92.3	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.2	3.1	3.3	18,270	2.6	0.7
Colorado	81.7	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	<0.1	4.6	4.6	3,291	5.6	-1
Connecticut	96.9	Medical, Religious	0.3	1.6	1.9	725	1.3	0.6
DC	≥96.4	Medical, Religious	<0.1	0.7	0.8	92	0.6	0.2
Delaware	89	Medical, Religious	1.1	0.4	1.5	118	2.1	-0.6
Florida	≥93.2	Medical, Religious	0.3	1.7	2	4,763	1.5	0.5
Georgia	≥94.0	Medical, Religious	<0.1	1.7	1.8	2,563	1.3	0.5
Hawaii	98.7	Medical, Religious	<0.1	3.2	3.2	634	3.9	-0.7
Idaho	88.2	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.4	6.1	6.4	1,540	5.4	1
Illinois	94.7	Medical, Religious	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	5.5	n.a.
Indiana	92.9	Medical, Religious	0.4	0.8	1.2	1,075	1.2	0
Iowa	≥91.0	Medical, Religious	0.5	1.2	1.7	726	1.5	0.2
Kansas	86.9	Medical, Religious	0.8	1.9	2.6	739	1.3	1.3
Kentucky	92.6	Medical, Religious	0.3	0.6	0.9	505	0.6	0.3
Louisiana	96.8	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.1	0.7	0.8	505	0.8	0
Maine	89.9	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.4	5.2	5.5	852	3.9	1.6
Maryland	97.6	Medical, Religious	0.3	0.7	1	758	0.9	0.1
Massachusetts	95.1	Medical, Religious	0.4	1.1	1.5	1,192	1.4	0.1
Michigan	97.5	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.5	5.4	5.9	7,049	5.5	0.4
Minnesota	93.4	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.6	n.a.
Mississippi	≥99.7	Medical Only	<0.1	n.a.	<0.1	17	0	n.a.
Missouri	95.5	Medical, Religious	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.4	n.a.
Montana	93.7	Medical, Religious	0.3	3.3	3.6	463	3	0.6
Nebraska	96.6	Medical, Religious	0.6	1.1	1.7	465	1.5	0.2
Nevada	95.6	Medical, Religious	<0.1	2	2	731	1.8	0.2
New Hampshire	≥94.7	Medical, Religious	0.4	2.5	2.8	377	2.2	0.6
New Jersey	≥96.8	Medical, Religious	0.2	1.4	1.6	2,003	1.3	0.3
New Mexico	95.9	Medical, Religious	0.2	0.9	1.1	349	2	-0.9
New York	96.8	Medical, Religious	0.1	0.6	0.8	1,849	0.7	0.1
North Carolina	98.8	Medical, Religious	0.1	0.9	1	1,266	0.8	0.2
North Dakota	90	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.3	2.3	2.7	262	1	1.7
Ohio	96.2	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.2	1.8	2	3,050	1.5	0.5
Oklahoma	96.4	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.1	1.4	1.5	880	1.1	0.4
Oregon	93.2	Medical, Religious	0.1	7	7.1	3,393	5.9	1.2
Pennsylvania	85.3	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.3	1.7	2	3,062	1.8	0.2
Rhode Island	95.1	Medical, Religious	0.3	0.7	1	114	1	0
South Carolina	96.8	Medical, Religious	0.1	1.2	1.4	855	1.1	0.3
South Dakota	96.6	Medical, Religious	0.2	1.6	1.8	220	1.2	0.6
Tennessee	≥94.9	Medical, Religious	0.2	1	1.1	906	0.7	0.4
Texas	97.2	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.6	1.4	1.9	7,803	1.5	0.4
Utah	98.1	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.2	4.2	4.4	2,406	3.8	0.6
Vermont	92	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.2	6.1	6.2	423	5.7	0.5
Virginia	98.3	Medical, Religious	0.2	0.4	0.6	619	1	-0.4
Washington	90.3	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	1.2	3.6	4.7	4,212	4.7	0
West Virginia	96.5	Medical Only	0.2	n.a.	0.2	35	0.2	0
Wisconsin	96.3	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	0.1	4.8	4.9	3,519	4.5	0.4
Wyoming	n.a.	Medical, Religious	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	n.a.
								0
Guam	88.4	Medical, Religious	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	1	0	n.a.
N.Mariana Islands	96	Medical, Religious	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palau	n.a.	Medical, Religious, Philosophical	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.3	n.a.
Puerto Rico	94.3	Medical, Religious	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	0	0	n.a.
U.S. Virgin Islands	90.5	Medical, Religious	0	1.1	1.1	17	0.5	0.6

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, MMWR, “Vaccination Coverage Among Children in Kindergarten – United States, 2013-14 School Year,” October 17, 2014. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6341a1.htm>