

→ Mark your confusion.

→ Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)

→ Write a 250+ word response to the article.

(If you are a teacher or student who would like to modify this Google Doc, go to File > Make a Copy. I cannot and do not respond to Share requests -- my apologies!)

Measles cases, once thought eliminated in U.S., at 25-year high

By *Washington Post*, adapted by *Newsela staff*, 05-14-19

Just over 700 people in the United States have been sickened this year by measles, a highly contagious and serious disease, said a report released April 29 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It's the greatest number of cases in a single year in 25 years. That represents a huge setback for public health after measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000.

More than 500 of the people infected in 22 states were not vaccinated. Sixty-six people have been hospitalized, and more than one-third of the cases are children younger than 5 years old.

Misinformation About Vaccines Led To Spread

The biggest and longest-lasting outbreaks are in New York's Rockland County and Brooklyn. Misinformation has spread there about the safety and effectiveness of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, officials said.

Thirteen outbreaks have been reported in 2019, accounting for 663 cases, or 94 percent of all cases. The CDC defines an outbreak as three or more cases. Half of those outbreaks were associated with close-knit religious or cultural communities that were undervaccinated, accounting for 88 percent of all cases.

In response to the record number of cases, New York City has imposed a mandatory vaccination order, and Rockland County has required that anyone with measles avoid public spaces or face a \$2,000-a-day fine. New York City officials said they had closed two schools.

In California, hundreds of college students were quarantined after a student with measles attended classes while contagious at the University of California, Los Angeles, and another contagious person spent hours at a library at California State University Los Angeles. As of April 29, 343 students and employees remained under quarantine. They were told to stay home and avoid contact with others as much as possible.

The extreme measures reflect the seriousness of the outbreaks. In a statement, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said, "We have come a long way in fighting infectious diseases in America, but we risk backsliding and seeing our families, neighbors and communities needlessly suffer from preventable diseases."

"We are very concerned about the recent troubling rise in cases of measles," Azar said to reporters. "Vaccine-preventable diseases belong in the history books, not in our emergency rooms. The suffering we are seeing today is completely avoidable. Vaccines are safe because they are among the most-studied medical products we have," he said.

No Treatment And No Cure — Just A Vaccine

There are no treatments and no cures for measles, CDC Director Robert Redfield said. "There is no way to predict how bad a case of measles will be," he said. Most of those sickened in this year's outbreaks have been unvaccinated, and most are children younger than 18, he said.

No deaths have been reported in outbreaks this year.

CDC officials said the United States is experiencing so many measles cases this year primarily because of large outbreaks in New York and Washington state. The New York City outbreak continues to grow. Thirty-three new cases were reported in the last five days, officials said April 29, bringing the total to 367 cases so far in 2019. Officials in Washington, where 72 people have become ill, declared the outbreak over.

In recent years, anti-vaccine groups have spread incorrect claims about the safety of the vaccine and minimized the dangers of measles. CDC officials blamed misinformation for low vaccination rates in some communities now hit by the outbreaks.

"Sadly, these communities are being targeted with inaccurate and misleading information about vaccines," said Nancy Messonnier. She oversees CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

To combat that misinformation, the agency has increased its work with healthcare providers and community leaders, she said.

Azar was asked whether President Donald Trump's previous embrace of discredited claims about vaccine safety had contributed to the spread of misinformation. He said Trump's statement on the importance of vaccination was "very firm."

Trump told reporters at the White House in April that parents need to vaccinate their children.

Deadly For Young Children

Measles can be deadly, especially for babies and young children. Some people may have severe complications, such as pneumonia, an infection of the lungs, and encephalitis, swelling of the brain, which can lead to hospitalization and death. Measles may cause pregnant women to give birth prematurely or have a low-birth-weight baby.

One dose of the measles vaccine is 93 percent effective, and the recommended two doses are 97 percent effective at preventing measles. The first dose is normally given at about 12 months, and the second at 4 to 6 years.

With summer travel approaching, the CDC has some recommendations. Infants 6 to 11 months old should get one dose of the measles vaccine before international travel. Children 12 months and older need two doses, separated by at least 28 days. Adolescents and adults who have not had measles or been vaccinated also should get two doses, at least 28 days apart.

Adults who travel internationally or work in health care and those in communities with ongoing outbreaks should check with their doctors.

The United States was able to eliminate person-to-person spreading of measles in 2000. However, because the virus is so contagious, communities need to have levels of 93 percent to 95 percent of the population vaccinated to protect against it.

Reduced Immunization Rates

Gaps in immunization coverage in the United States and around the world in recent years have resulted in lower immunization rates. Many countries are experiencing measles outbreaks.

As a result, when travelers get measles abroad and return to the United States, especially to communities with low vaccination rates, these communities are at risk of ongoing outbreaks, the CDC report said.

The virus lives in the nose and throat of an infected person. It can spread by direct contact with infectious droplets or through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes.

Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90 percent of the people who are close to that person or who walk through the same area and are not immune may become infected.

Response option(s):

- According to the article, what factors are contributing to this resurgence of measles in the U.S.?
- There is no federal law governing school vaccines; it is left up to the states. All 50 states mandate specific vaccines for children entering school. Almost all (47) states allow a religious exemption. 16 states (including Michigan) allow "philosophical exemption" for those who have personal or moral beliefs against vaccines. In your view, should these exemptions be allowed?
- Pick any passage and respond to it.