

## **Leading Massachusetts physician organizations urge vaccinations for measles, other infectious diseases**

Physicians from the Massachusetts Medical Society, the Massachusetts Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians, the Massachusetts Infectious Disease Society, and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American College of Physicians have deep concerns about the rise in vaccine-preventable illnesses, including measles, that can result in severe health consequences.

We strongly encourage everyone to review their immunization histories to make sure they are up to date on recommended and required vaccinations or otherwise have evidence of immunity.

The threat of outbreaks of preventable infectious disease in the United States and Massachusetts is unpredictable, but outbreaks do occur. Vaccines remain our best defense against these diseases, and reductions in vaccination rates increase the unnecessary risk that diseases will be contracted and transmitted.

We know that some of our patients and neighbors have concerns about the safety and efficacy of vaccines, in part due to the spread of misinformation. It is our responsibility, as medical groups representing most of the physicians in Massachusetts, to reaffirm what decades of scientific, evidence-based research has proven: immunization is a safe and effective means to protect against disease, as well as hospitalization, disability, and death. Immunization saves lives and prevents infections and public health crises. Physicians and other members of our health care teams are a reliable source for sound, medically supported vaccine information and are working to build public trust in vaccines by addressing common misconceptions about the vaccination process. We welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns with our patients.

The rise in measles across the nation has exacerbated concern over other highly transmissible illnesses like influenza, COVID-19, pertussis, and RSV that continue to make our patients sick and claim lives.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed close to 400 cases of measles in the United States. Although Massachusetts has not yet reported a case of measles this year, the disease is squarely on the radar of clinicians and public health experts. Measles is highly contagious and can cause morbidity and mortality, especially in children or those with compromised immune systems.

All individuals in Massachusetts should ensure they are up to date on their measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) immunity. This is especially important prior to international travel, as travelers outside the U.S. have at times contracted measles, and brought it back, causing outbreaks, mostly in communities with low rates of vaccinations.

It is imperative that students are up to date on their MMR and other vaccinations required to attend school in the Commonwealth, given the critical role vaccines play in keeping our schools safe by reducing the potential for outbreaks that may disrupt learning and lead to serious illness.

If you have symptoms of measles or an exposure to measles, please contact your health care team as soon as possible for guidance.

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- Chloe A. Zera, MD, MPH, FACOG, Chair of the Massachusetts Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

- Brenda Anders Pring, MD, FAAP, President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

- Michael Richardson, MD, President, Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians

- Armando Paez, MD, FACP, FIDSA, President, Massachusetts Infectious Disease Society

- Judith A. Melin, MA, MD, FACP, Governor, Massachusetts Chapter of the American College of Physicians