

## Measles cases hit new high; AAP urges vaccination

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**Editor's note:** *An updated story is available at*

<https://www.aappublications.org/news/2019/04/29/measles042919>.

Measles cases this year have climbed to 695, the highest number since the virus was eliminated almost two decades ago, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Academy is urging families to vaccinate their children and lawmakers to make it harder to opt out of vaccine requirements for school entry.

“It is disappointing to see that the U.S. has lost so much ground in our efforts to prevent a childhood disease as significant and impactful as measles,” said Yvonne A. Maldonado, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. “This is especially discouraging because our intervention is safe and effective. There is no reason for children to suffer from measles.”

The respiratory disease has **symptoms** like fever cough, runny nose and watery eyes followed by a rash. It can result in complications like pneumonia, brain damage and deafness and can be fatal.

Cases have been reported this year in 22 states. Outbreaks are ongoing in Rockland County, New York; New York City; Washington; New Jersey, Michigan; and Butte County, Calif.

Measles was considered eliminated in 2000. Since that time, the highest case count was 667 in 2014, according to the CDC. The virus is highly contagious and those who contract it typically are unvaccinated. Pockets of unvaccinated people are especially vulnerable.

The CDC and the Academy recommend children receive the first dose of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) at 12-15 months and the second dose at 4-6 years. During an outbreak affecting infants, MMR vaccine may be recommended for infants ages 6 months through 11 months, but should not count toward the two-dose series, according to the *AAP Red Book*. Depending on local measles activity, local and state health departments may have additional recommendations.

“Pediatricians should continue to communicate in an open and honest fashion with their patients and families about the dangers of vaccine-preventable diseases not only to their children, but to children of their own family members and within their own communities,” Dr. Maldonado said.

Misinformation online about the safety of vaccines has been a growing threat to vaccination rates.

In March, AAP President Kyle E. Yasuda, M.D., FAAP, **sent letters** to the CEOs of Google (which owns YouTube), Facebook (which owns WhatsApp and Instagram) and Pinterest requesting that they partner with

the Academy to make sure parents using their platforms are seeing credible, science-based information.

Academy leaders also are advocating for the elimination of non-medical exemptions to school vaccination requirements, which they voted the top [priority at the Annual Leadership Forum](#) last month.

All but three states — California, Mississippi and West Virginia — allow non-medical exemptions. Ten states — Arizona, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington — have introduced legislation this year to eliminate them. Several states are debating ways to toughen the process of obtaining a non-medical exemption.

“Vaccine preventable diseases killed tens of thousands of children every year in the U.S.,” Dr. Maldonado said. “And that should not happen again.”

## Resources

- [CDC’s measles web page](#)
- [Information from AAP Red Book on measles outbreaks](#)
- [AAP clinical report "Countering Vaccine Hesitancy"](#)
- [AAP policy "Medical Versus Nonmedical Immunization Exemptions for Child Care and School Attendance"](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on measles outbreaks](#)
- [AAP News story "Study: MMR vaccine not linked to increased autism risk"](#)
- [AAP News story "When should measles vaccine be given? What is interval between doses?"](#)
- [Pediatricians seeking more information about advocacy to eliminate non-medical exemptions in their states can email \[stgov@aap.org\]\(mailto:stgov@aap.org\).](#)

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