



## AAP: Florida efforts to end vaccine mandates endanger children, will have ‘ripple effects’

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Florida officials are working to end all vaccine mandates; a move the AAP says puts children at risk.

If the state is successful, it would be the first not to require vaccines for school entry.

“When everyone in a school is vaccinated, it’s harder for diseases to spread, and easier for everyone to keep the fun and learning going,” said AAP President Susan J. Kressly, M.D., FAAP. “When children are sick and miss school, parents also miss work, which not only impacts those families, but also the local economy. We are concerned that today’s announcement ... will put children in Florida public schools at higher risk for getting sick, and have ripple effects across their community.”

A [2024 study](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found vaccines prevented 508 million lifetime illnesses, 32 million hospitalizations and 1.1 million deaths among children born from 1994-2023.

In Florida, [vaccine requirements](#) vary by grade level. For kindergarten through high school they include vaccines that protect against diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B and varicella.

Last school year, about 5.1% of Florida kindergartners had an exemption to vaccine mandates, compared to 3.6% nationally, according to [CDC data](#). Nearly all of the exemptions were nonmedical.

In July, the AAP released an updated [policy statement](#) in which it continued to call for states to eliminate nonmedical exemptions. The AAP also recently released its own [evidence-based immunization schedule](#) for children and adolescents as federal health officials continue to sow distrust in vaccines.

During a press conference Wednesday, Florida Surgeon General Joseph A. Ladapo, M.D., Ph.D., likened vaccines to slavery and said government does not have the right to tell people what to put in their bodies. He said that the state's Department of Health has the power to eliminate some of these mandates, and he and Gov. Ron DeSantis will work with the state legislature to remove the rest. Ladapo also made headlines in 2023 when federal health officials [admonished him](#) for spreading misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

His comments Wednesday followed DeSantis' announcement that he is creating a Florida Make America Healthy Again Commission that he said would integrate the principles of individual medical freedom, informed consent, parent rights and market innovation.

The efforts come as measles is continuing to spread with [1,431 cases](#) nationwide this year, the highest since 1992. Three people have died including two children. Pertussis cases also have been on the rise with [19,159 cases](#) this year, up from 17,348 at the same time last year.

## Resources

- [AAP immunization schedule](#)
- AAP policy [Medical Versus Nonmedical Immunization Exemptions for Child Care and School Attendance](#)
- AAP Fact Checked articles correcting misinformation on [measles, mumps and rubella](#), [hepatitis B](#) and [diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis](#) vaccines; debunking claims that vaccines cause [sudden infant death](#); and addressing concerns about [fetal cells and thimerosal](#).
- [AAP immunization resources](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on recommended immunization schedules](#)
- [Pediatrics in Review](#) article "Recognizing a Few of the Vaccine Preventable Diseases"