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Health + Fitness

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Michigan doctors warn of risks of skipping vaccines

Shawn D. Lewis

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Michigan physicians spoke out Tuesday about the risks of a dangerous increase in childhood diseases in the state and the need to have children vaccinated against the illnesses.

But many parents are not heeding the advice, refusing to vaccinate their children.

Michigan has the fourth highest non-medical vaccine exemption rate in the nation, with 5.3 percent of parents choosing not to immunize, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Only Idaho, Vermont and Oregon have higher rates. Nationally, more than 91,000 out of more than 4.2 million kindergarteners weren't vaccinated.

Michigan's exemption rate rankles the state's medical community.

"We think parents are getting misinformation about the dangers of vaccines from the Internet, instead of going to their own doctors to get accurate information," said Dr. Karen B. Mitchell, program director for the Providence Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program in Southfield, who spoke Tuesday during a press conference in Lansing to mark the start of National [Infant](#) Immunization Week.

"Some parents fear a correlation between vaccines and autism, but that has been very thoroughly studied, and there is no connection."

Before entering kindergarten, it is recommended children receive vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, Hepatitis B and chicken pox.

But parents can request a vaccination exemption if a physician certifies an immunization is, or may be, detrimental to the child's health, or for religious reasons or other objections. Michigan law protects parents from being forced to get their child vaccinated.

Dr. Anthony F. Ognjan, chief of infectious diseases for McLaren Macomb, said the [benefits](#) of shots outweigh the possible risks.

"You risk the chance of becoming brain damaged because of measles, men can become sterile from the mumps, and some infections can overwhelm the body and people can die," he said.

He said organizations such as Michigan Opposing Mandatory Vaccines, “absolutely raise my ire.”

“If you want to live in society, protecting people from infectious diseases is part of it, and saying, ‘this is my right,’ doesn’t fly with me,” he said.

Exercising her right not to vaccinate her child is why Suzanne Waltman, 53, of St. Clair Shores started Michigan Opposing Mandatory Vaccines in 1993. Her daughter, now 23, did not receive any of the recommended vaccines.

“I chose not to use drugs for health care,” she said. “My daughter got chicken pox and mumps, but she was fine. I don’t think you can drug your way to health.”

Waltman argues catching the diseases strengthens one’s immune system.

“I had measles, mumps and rubella, and I still have immunity against them,” she said. “There is a lot of fear and scare mongering going on.”

In addition to Michigan’s high rate of non-medical exemptions, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health, only 72 percent of Michigan children and 63 percent of adolescents are fully immunized — the rest are missing at least one critical vaccination — leading to recent outbreaks of preventable diseases.

There were nearly 1,000 cases of whooping cough in Michigan last year, an increase of nearly 18 percent over 2012.

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From The Detroit News:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20140429/LIFESTYLE03/304290087#ixzz30Mts0Gp1>



Immunization awareness campaign hits Mid-Michigan (with video)

Posted: Apr 29, 2014 6:53 PM EST Updated: Apr 29, 2014 7:01 PM EST

By Kevin Goff - [bio](#) | [email](#)



(04/29/14) - Recent outbreaks of measles and whooping cough in the nation, have many doctors concerned about the possible increase of dangerous diseases in children right here in Mid-Michigan. It's a rallying cry that should be heeded on the importance of immunizing young children to help prevent the spread of contagious diseases.

"They are all up on their immunizations. We never get behind. We're always a little bit early.

A foster parent to six children, Grand Blanc resident Regina Kinzer knows how vital it is for her kids to stay current on their vaccinations.

"Because it's very important for them to keep their health up and their strength up. Because at this age, their immune system is down. It's up to us as parents to make sure they keep up on those things."

Conferences and initiatives are taking place all over Michigan in conjunction with National Infant Immunization Week to showcase how vital vaccinations are in keeping infants and kids from contracting communicable diseases, once thought extinct.

"Parents always have the option of "opting out" of vaccines for their children. But we strongly encourage our parents to immunize their children. Studies have shown they are all safe and effective," says Dr. Paul Chrenka, a pediatrician at The Children's Office.

According to the Center For Disease Control, measles have infected nearly 130 people in 13 states, so far this year. Some doctors blame dis-information on anti-immunization websites that may frighten parents.

"There are no studies that have ever been done that show, no competent studies that have been done, that show an association with vaccination and autism," Dr. Chrenka said.

Other pediatricians, like Dr. Mona Hanna Attisha think communication between doctors and parents play a role.

"Some people worry that my kids are getting too many vaccines, do they have to get six shots at once. I think they don't realize that vaccines are so purified now," she said.

Other diseases have seen an increase too.

"We're seeing epidemics of Polio globally. They haven't come here yet. There's a huge resurgence of diphtheria which is whooping cough. If you go into our hospital unit right now at Hurley Children's, you'll find a baby that's pertussis positive," Dr. Attisha said.

Infants and young children should have an immunization schedule to protect them early in life, before they are exposed to potentially life-threatening diseases.

<http://www.abc12.com/story/25383827/immunization-awareness-campaign-hits-mid-michigan>



Michigan Doctors Stress Importance Of Vaccines: 'You Don't Need To Die Of These Diseases'

April 29, 2014 4:42 PM



Sean Lee

DETROIT (WWJ) – Michigan's doctors are sounding the alarm over the state's high rate of unvaccinated kids.

Whether they're influenced by celebrities, or relying on advice from the Internet, more Michigan parents are choosing not to vaccinate their kids against preventable childhood illnesses.

That's why doctors from the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians and the Michigan Osteopathic Association are speaking up during National Infant Immunization Week.

Anthony Ognjan says vaccines protect kids from deadly, preventable diseases and protect families from the heartbreak of losing a child.

"I don't ever wanna see parents or adults going through this with their children, or their grandchildren, or their nieces or nephews," Ognjan said. "You don't need to die of these diseases; you don't need to suffer the consequences."

"A simple vaccine taken in context when they're supposed to be given is all you need to protect yourself and your children," he said,

Providence Family Medicine Doctor Karen Mitchell says parents concerned about vaccine safety should have a conversation about risk versus benefit with their children's pediatrician.

“The science behind it is saying that vaccines are very safe; they’re some of the safest things that we do in medicine,” said Mitchell,” and anyone who has a medical concern really should be talking with their own personal physician.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Michigan ranks fourth in the nation for parents who opt out of vaccine with non-medical exemptions.

<http://detroit.cbslocal.com/2014/04/29/michigan-doctors-stress-importance-of-vaccines-you-dont-need-to-die-of-these-diseases/>

Call for Michigan parents to immunize children

By Aftab Borika, aftab.borka@oakpress.com, [@aftabborka](https://twitter.com/aftabborka) on Twitter

Posted: 04/29/14, 1:15 PM EDT | Updated: 11 hrs ago

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Immunization by numbers

72 percent of Michigan children are fully immunized

63 percent of Michigan adolescents are fully immunized

1,000 cases of whooping cough in Michigan last year alone

18 percent increase in whooping cough cases over 2012

Michigan's health care community is calling for parents to get their children immunized to protect them from infectious diseases like measles, mumps, rubella and more, as they highlighted the importance of the National Infant Immunization Week from April 26-May 3 at a press event at Providence Hospital in Southfield.

According to recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Michigan has the fourth highest non-medical exemption rate in the nation, with 5.3 percent of parents choosing not to immunize their children. The other three states with the exemption rates over 5 percent are Oregon, Vermont and Idaho.

“Childhood immunizations protect our kids from dangerous, infectious diseases like measles, mumps and whooping cough, but more and more Michigan kids are at risk as non-medical opt-out rates rise and immunization rates fall,” said Anthony F. Ognjan, D.O., FACP, chief of Infectious Diseases for McLaren Macomb.

<http://www.dailytribune.com/general-news/20140429/call-for-michigan-parents-to-immunize-children>

Lack of shots leading to disease outbreaks (with video)

by [Jamie Innis](#)

Posted: 04.29.2014 at 10:48 PM

GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY -- Physicians and nurses observed the start of National Infant Immunization Week Tuesday. A growing number of parents opting out of getting their kids vaccinated, so doctors are getting the word out.

Michigan parents are among the most likely in the nation to choose not to get their kids vaccinated.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan has the fourth highest non-medical exemption rate for immunizations at 5.3-percent.

That figure worries staff in the medical field because those diseases, although preventable, are on the rise.

“There's mumps in Ohio. There's measles in New York and California,” said Wendy Trute of the Grand Traverse County Health Department. “It's a decision that shouldn't be made lightly.”

In Grand Traverse County, eleven percent of parents—nearly twice the state average—have signed waivers, exempting their school-aged kids from vaccines for medical, philosophical or religious reasons.

“That's our biggest concern. Once you hit the school age, it's not just an individual decision. You are potentially affecting classmates, teachers who may be immune-compromised, pregnant women,” said Trute.

One reason doctors give for parents opting out of vaccinations is that this generation hasn't really experienced the diseases.

“I know that when families make that choice, they're very well-intended and they want to do the best they can for their children,” said Dr. Cynthia Smith, Pediatrician at Kids Creek Children's Clinic. “Families just don't see the diseases, so they're not real to them. So you don't think about whooping cough, you don't think about meningitis.”

Health care professionals say those diseases should be on parents' radar.

“Last year alone, Michigan saw nearly one-thousand cases of whooping cough. That's up nearly 18-percent from the year before,” said Debra McGuire, CEO of the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians. “Vaccinations help protect our kids from dangerous infectious diseases, like measles, mumps, rubella, and several more.”

There's a growing amount of information online, weighing the pros and cons of vaccinations, but for many doctors, the choice is clear.

“The connection to autism has been thoroughly disproven and the initial research that suggested that as a possibility has been completely discredited and withdrawn,” explained Smith. “A prick from a needle is no fun, but those diseases are terrible. I've seen them. It would be really nice if I never saw them again.”

The healthcare professionals referenced in this story all recommended sitting down with your family doctor to figure out what's right for your kids.

“We try to explore with families what specific things they're concerned about,” said Smith.

The Grand Traverse County Health Department can also help answer questions. It has expanded hours and accepts walk-ins.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, only 72-percent of Michigan children are fully immunized. They recommend parents complete the entire series of immunizations.

“The goal, statewide, is to get people up to 85-percent. That would be for optimal coverage. That would give the best protection,” said Trute.

“I'm really worried that it will take a disease really injuring, even killing, children before those disease become real again,” said Smith.

“It's unfortunate because it's preventable,” said McGuire.

<http://www.upnorthlive.com/news/story.aspx?id=1037705#.U2DdQFfijzl>



Doctors Urge Parents To Get Infants Vaccinated (with video)

Posted: Apr 29, 2014 5:38 PM EST Updated: Apr 29, 2014 5:38 PM EST

By Nick Perreault - [email](#)



(WLNS) - This week is National Infant Immunization Week and Michigan ranks fourth in the country, but for many, it's not in a good way.

Our state ranks fourth in the number of people who get exemptions from getting immunizations.

6 News Nick Perreault talked with some doctors who say those shots are crucial for children and you.

This little girl might be crying because she's hungry, but doctors say it could be worse if she's not up to date on her immunizations

"Pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, even cancer," said Andrea Amalfitano, D.O. Ph.D, MSU Professor, Pediatrics.

Those are just some of the diseases that Dr. Amalfitano says immunizations could prevent. The problem is many in Michigan are not choosing to get their immunizations

"Families might hear it about one vaccine and may not differentiate between another," said Dr. Jane turner, MD, MSU Professor, Pediatrics.

From safety concerns to the web, Dr. Turner believes a lot has to do with mis-information.

"As it rises we're going to see more of these diseases circulating," said Dr. Turner.

Just last year Michigan saw 1,000 cases of whooping cough. There was also a case of measles with someone from Battle Creek.

So these doctors say don't skip those crucial shots.

"You're putting your child at risk by not getting the proper vaccination schedule which has been tested over decades."

"I like to say that it's a little petri dish of all sorts of problems," said Elisabeth Weston, Executive Director, Educational Child Care Center.

That's something Weston has seen at the Children's Center in Lansing the past four years.
"We've got about 120 kids here; about 20 of them are infants."

These doctors say it's not just the children that benefit from the proper vaccinations.
"Getting a child vaccinated against influenza protects grandma and grandpa and the family from getting that infection."

That's a reason that can leave everyone happy and healthy.



Michigan Stepping Up Efforts On Child Vaccination

Posted Wednesday, April 30th 2014 @ 4am by Michigan Radio Network

Health organizations in Michigan are locking arms in an effort to increase Michigan's child vaccination rate.

Michigan ranks fourth highest nationally, in the percentage of non-medical vaccination exemptions.

In fact, more than five percent of parents in the state simply choose not to immunize their children, and only three other states, Oregon, Vermont and Idaho, have non-medical exemption rates over five percent. Higher vaccination rates mean a healthier world for everyone, according to Dr. Andrea Amalfitano in the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Michigan State University.

But Michigan is not going in the right direction. For example, there were nearly one-thousand cases of whooping cough in Michigan last year alone, an 18-percent increase over 2012. And many children required hospitalization because of it.

He and other professionals say the need to do a better job in showing parents that immunization is still one of the best ways to protect their children from preventable diseases.

Read more: <http://www.woodradio.com/articles/wood-news-125494/michigan-stepping-up-efforts-on-child-12302027#ixzz30MzcRCcp>



Mich. Medical Society: Remove choice to not immunize(with video)

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WZZM) -- Michigan has one of the highest rates of unvaccinated children in the country. Nearly 6% of our children attend school without being immunized.

The Michigan State Medical Society wants to change that by taking away one of the choices on the state's immunization form.

The group unanimously voted to request the change be made to the State's Public Health Policy Code and says by eliminating the option of selecting "other" the rate of vaccinations may improve

President Rose Ramirez says right now parents can opt out of vaccinating their child for religious, medical or other reasons, "To just not give your children vaccines when you don't think they should have them when it is in their best interest and for the interest of our communities as a whole I think that we should have everyone vaccinated that can be."

The concern is that it only takes one case of a virus like measles to start an epidemic, "Epidemics just sort of our spring out of nowhere; that's the concern." says Dr. James Applegate, a family doctor with Mercy Health, "Something comes into our environment like the virus either in a daycare or in travel that exposes one child who isn't immunized who then exposes other children who aren't immunized and that's what causes an epidemic."

Here is some perspective on measles cases in Michigan over the past ten years:

There have been 14 cases. The last one occurred in 2013 in Battle Creek.

Nearly all of them stemmed from an unvaccinated person traveling outside the U.S.

And not all of them were young children, they included teens and adults.

As for the recommendation from the Michigan State Medical Society it's now up to the organization to find a legislator to sponsor a bill and get it passed before the change can be made.

Parents will still have the right to opt out of having their children vaccinated for religious or medical reasons even if the change is adopted.

<http://www.wzzm13.com/story/news/health/2014/04/29/medical-society-remove-choice/8459347/>



Doctors Urge Vaccines for Kids During National Immunization Week

Posted: Tue 6:59 PM, Apr 29, 2014

By: News 10



What better place to make a point about the importance of vaccinating your child than a child care center?

Local doctors, nurses, educators, and health care professionals urged parents Tuesday to immunize their kids against infectious diseases like measles, mumps and rubella. It's part of National Immunization Week.

The director of the EC3 Educational Child Care Center says there's a lot of misinformation out there.

"We've come across parents who have chosen not to immunize their children because they think it's going to hurt their kids or that it's going to cause some problems later on," said Elizabeth Weston, EC3's executive director. "It's important they get the real facts and not just forgo the immunizations based on some of these myths."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and [Prevention](#), Michigan has the highest non-medical exemption rate of any state in the country, with more than five percent of parents choosing not to immunize their children.

<http://www.wilx.com/news/headlines/Doctors-Urge-Vaccines-for-Kids-During-National-Immunization-Week-257244541.html>



Doctors urge parents to get kids vaccinated (with video)

Updated: Tuesday, April 29 2014, 10:47 AM EDT

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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (NEWSCHANNEL 3) – Doctors in Grand Rapids are issuing an urgent call to parents to get their children vaccinated.

They say dangerous childhood diseases are surging here in Michigan and immunizations are critically important for kids.

However, a growing number of parents simply are not vaccinating.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Michigan has the fourth highest rate of non-medical exemptions for immunizations in the nation.

That typically refers to parents who opt out of vaccinations due to personal beliefs, like religion or fears about vaccines carrying greater risks than they are worth.

Doctors worry this year, with recent outbreaks of diseases like measles and whooping cough, many Michigan kids will not be protected.

The first four months of the year saw at least 130 cases of measles in the US, the highest number for a similar period in nearly 20 years.

The CDC says most of those patients either had not been vaccinated or were not sure if they had been.

This week is National Infant Immunization Week. If you'd like to learn more about what vaccines are recommended for your child, [click here](#).

http://wwwt.com/shared/news/features/top-stories/stories/wwwt_doctors-urge-parents-get-kids-vaccinated-20430.shtml#.U2DkzVfijzI