

THE BALTIMORE STATEMENT ON CHILDHOOD VACCINATION

In the 1930s, measles infections in Baltimore sickened thousands and killed or permanently injured hundreds of children every year. Outbreaks came and went, seemingly at random, bringing uncertainty, fear, and tragedy to families across our city.

Then a scientist recognized a pattern. He found that the outbreaks occurred at times when most children in Baltimore had not experienced measles and were therefore susceptible to the infection. He correctly reasoned that when enough children were immune to measles by virtue of having survived a past infection, the virus could not easily spread.

This pattern turned out to be the key to the effectiveness of vaccination, one of the safest and most successful medical advances in history. By increasing the number of children who are immune, vaccines prevent outbreaks of lethal disease.

After an effective measles vaccine was developed in the 1960s, the number of measles cases in Baltimore began to decline. For the last ten years, our city has seen zero measles infections. Zero hospitalizations. Zero permanent injuries. Zero deaths.

But Baltimore is not an island. Despite consensus among doctors and scientists that vaccines are safe and effective, there have been increasing numbers of parents who have chosen not to vaccinate their children. In 2014, there were 644 cases of measles across 27 states.

The recent outbreak that began at Disneyland is spreading among unvaccinated children. As a result, parents of children who are not able to be vaccinated, such as those under one year of age and those with weakened immune systems, are fearful of illness and complications. The Disneyland outbreak raises the real risk that measles may come roaring back.

We have come too far to let that happen. Please join Baltimore's health department and our region's pediatricians to stand against measles. Make sure your child is up-to-date on all vaccines. This protects your child and will help safeguard all children in our community. Vaccines are more than individual choice; they are our obligation to one another. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss them with your doctor. We can address misinformation and myths about vaccination with science and facts.

Together, we can keep our children healthy and our community safe and well.

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