

## OPINION-EDITORIAL

**Information**       **Advisory**       **Warning**       **Update**

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### **Opinion-Editorial: Measles, Mumps, Rubella...Oh, My!**

A recent cluster of probable mumps cases in St. Clair County has reignited the discussion on vaccines. Whenever we can get people talking, that is a good thing. From a public health perspective, vaccines have been repeatedly proven to work and control the spread of the diseases. St. Clair County is among the lowest vaccinated counties in the state (we rank 79th out of 84 counties for completing the recommended vaccine schedule for children 19 – 35 months of age) and those numbers are getting worse every year. Because of our large unvaccinated population, our citizens are particularly vulnerable to vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs). We are seeing more diseases that were previously very rare after the use of vaccines. This “emergence” of cases corresponds directly to the amount of people who are choosing not to get vaccinated. It’s important to address why this is happening and how to protect ourselves better.

In regards to safety standards, the United States has 3 separate, independent systems to keep track of vaccines following the numerous clinical trials needed to get FDA approval and to market them. This means our vaccine supply is the safest in the world and monitored more closely than any other medical treatment we use. In fact, it’s hard to find a medication, treatment or therapy that is tested as extensively as vaccines.

Since many viral and bacterial infections start out the same way (fever, fatigue, body aches) it may be difficult to tell them apart from common infections. Some VPDs have rashes that can be the hallmark of something more serious, but others do not. Most of them are still uncommon (for now), so inform your healthcare provider right away if you or your child have not been vaccinated in order for these illnesses to be considered and tested for. Remember that many illnesses caused by infectious agents

can be transmitted before symptoms even start or after they go away. This is an important factor when we advise people on how long they should stay out of work/school to avoid exposing other vulnerable people and preventing its spread. For more information on what to look for in VPDs, visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/vaccines-diseases.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/vaccines-diseases.html).

Not only are these infections spread easily from person to person, but also there are limited treatment options, particularly for viral infections. This is why your doctor advises vaccines to help prevent the infection in the first place. Vaccines use your own natural immune system to “build the army” it needs to fight off invading germs before they actually make you sick. For information on how vaccines work visit <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/vpd-vac-basics.html>.

The more you know, the more the conversation continues! Keep talking about vaccines, how they work, when they don't and why well-meaning people are reluctant to get them. The more people stay informed and have discussions, the more prepared we will be for the next disease outbreak.

Yours in health,

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