California measles outbreak escalating

The largest outbreak of measles in California in years is prompting school officials to redouble their efforts to convince parents to vaccinate their children. At the time this article was written, there were 92 confirmed cases in California.

State law requires children to be vaccinated for a variety of illnesses by the time they enter kindergarten. But parents may obtain “personal belief exemptions” from the required vaccinations, making their children more vulnerable to contracting potentially fatal illnesses and transmitting the viruses to others.

Dr. Gilberto F. Chavez, deputy director of the Center for Infectious Diseases at the California Department of Public Health, has made it clear that if a school has a student with a confirmed case of measles, districts should send unvaccinated students home.

The highly contagious virus was declared eradicated in the U.S. in 2000. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of parents choosing not to vaccinate their children, many basing their decisions on “pure misinformation,” according to Dr. Chavez.

Information for parents about measles

Measles can be serious, especially for children younger than 5 years old. It can lead to pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and death. Learn how you can protect your child from measles:

- Information about measles and the vaccine to prevent it
- Immunization schedule for children from birth through age 6 [2 pages]
- FAQ about measles in the U.S.

Some adults need measles vaccine, too. For more information, see Measles Vaccine: Who Needs It?
March 2015
Health and Wellness Observances

California Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Month
American Red Cross Month
Brain Injury Awareness Month
National Colorectal Awareness Month
National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
National Nutrition Month
Save Your Vision Month

March 2-6: National School Breakfast Week

March 2-8: National Sleep Awareness Week

March 8-14: National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week

March 15-21: National Poison Prevention Week

March 23-27: National Youth Violence Prevention Week

March 24: American Diabetes Alert Day

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Study finds preschool programs lower special-education referrals

Children in state-supported, high-quality preschool programs are less likely to be placed in special education, according to Duke University research. Researchers found that spending $1,110 per child in pre-K programs reduced by 32 percent the likelihood students would be placed in special education by the end of 3rd grade. Read more.

How to make meals matter for your child

Parents are the most important influence in their children’s lives — and that includes food and physical activity choices. Parents can listen to a 20-minute presentation on each of the topics listed below or, if you are a nutrition educator, you can use the presentations and supplemental resources (program outline, handouts, script and more) to answer the most common nutrition questions that parents ask. Most resources are available in English and Spanish.

Get detailed, helpful answers to these questions:

- What are the general nutrition recommendations for elementary-age children? Learn more.
- How big is a serving size for children? Learn more.
- Is it time to rethink your drink? What healthy beverages are available for elementary students and families? Learn more.
- Oh no! You have a picky eater at the table. How do you handle this situation in a positive way? Learn more.