



## Public Health Brief

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### Rumors and Falsehoods – What Not to Do

*"Olivia, my eldest daughter, caught measles when she was 7 years old. As the illness took its usual course I can remember reading to her often in bed and not feeling particularly alarmed about it. Then one morning, when she was well on the road to recovery, I was sitting on her bed showing her how to fashion little animals out of coloured pipe-cleaners, and when it came to her turn to make one herself, I noticed that her fingers and her mind were not working together and she couldn't do anything.*

*'Are you feeling all right?' I asked her.*

*'I feel all sleepy,' she said.*

*In an hour, she was unconscious. In 12 hours she was dead."*

[Roald Dahl \(author of Charlie and the Chocolate factory, Matilda, and The BFG\) opens in a new tab or window](#) on the death of his daughter to measles in 1962 – read his letter to all of us.

*"I see somebody on a hiking trail carrying a little baby and I say to him, better not get them vaccinated," – [Robert F. Kennedy Jr. opens in a new tab or window](#) (2021)*

In this final installment in the series on measles, let's tackle 3 questions:

- Is measles serious?
- Is the vaccine safe?
- Are there other means of prevention and/or treatment?



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## Is measles serious?

The above letter and information shared over the last 2 days hopefully has given you some “food for thought” if you think measles is always mild and just about a fever and a rash. Do not follow the advice of U.S. Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene from Georgia who recently suggested that “measles parties” can build up children’s immunity to the virus. Dangerous! In fact, measles can cause severe complications, including secondary infections, and can sometimes be deadly. Most people alive today have never experienced measles, thanks to vaccines that were first rolled out in 1963. In the decade before the vaccine’s introduction, an [estimated 3 to 4 million people a year](#) were infected with measles in the United States. Of those, an estimated 48,000 people were hospitalized and 400 to 500 people died each year.

If you are still not convinced, and need a good laugh, please read: <https://prospect.org/health/2025-03-28-how-to-throw-measles-party-to-remember/>

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## Is the measles vaccine effective and safe?

While HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has issued a lukewarm endorsement for getting vaccinated against measles, he has also continued to cast doubts about the shot. He told Fox News in two interviews recently that the vaccine "causes deaths every year" and "causes all the illnesses that measles itself causes, encephalitis and blindness." He also said the vaccine "waned about 4.5% per year, so that means older people are essentially unvaccinated." All blatant lies, backed up by more than 60 years of experience with the vaccine.

Vaccines, including the MMR vaccine, do not cause autism. This has been thoroughly studied—over [25 epidemiological studies](#), including a fantastic [2019](#) analysis of more than 600,000 children in Denmark, have refuted any link. There’s also no biological plausibility: no vaccine component can alter neuron connections, and most brain changes associated with autism occur in utero, well before a child receives vaccines.

Yet the CDC has been tasked with running yet another study on this question, and has hired a vaccine sceptic, David Geier to run the study. He is a long discredited-researcher, a vaccine sceptic, and was disciplined for practicing medicine without a license in Maryland. He does not have any advanced science or medical degree. This does a disservice to parents and clinicians who need answers about autism—not reviving falsehoods that keep pulling focus from the questions we need answered.

Most critically, this study diverts attention from the questions that matter. There are no cures for autism or treatments that reverse it, and parents need real answers - answers that could come from



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investing in research on its true causes rather than rehashing debunked myths. It diverts attention from needs—education, services, medical research, and compassion and understanding.

Autism diagnoses have increased globally over the last 60 years. Most of this rise is due to changes in how we define and diagnose it, but even standardized tracking suggests an increase.

What we do know is that vaccines have nothing to do with it. Alison Singer, president of the Autism Science Foundation said, "It seems the goal of this administration is to prove that vaccines cause autism, even though they don't. They are starting with the conclusion and looking to prove it. That's not how science is done." And every dollar spent chasing that disproven link is a dollar not spent on research that could help parents and children. So much for efficient use of limited and decreasing government funds!

[https://autismsciencefoundation.org/autism-and-vaccines-read-the-science/?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://autismsciencefoundation.org/autism-and-vaccines-read-the-science/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

[https://www.cdc.gov/autism/addm-network/sites.html?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.cdc.gov/autism/addm-network/sites.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email)

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Other than the vaccine, are there any other evidence-based prevention measures or evidence-based treatment measures for measles?

For prevention, vaccine is the single most effective measure. Gamma globulin can be used within a narrow window of time following exposure. And of course exposed persons, especially school-aged children, should be kept home and out of school during the incubation period when they may be contagious (See: <https://alpinecountyca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7570/ACPHB-measles-22525>)

Parents are taking control and attempting to treat cases in their children with natural remedies. A mother in Texas reports that her son recovered from measles with little problem after she fed him organic food and cod liver oil, bathed him in magnesium salts, and rubbed him in beef-tallow cream infused with lavender. Glad to hear he did well!

Secretary Kennedy has endorsed an unconventional treatment regimen for measles including a steroid, an antibacterial, and cod liver oil, which is rich in vitamin A. He praised 2 West Texas doctors who he said were using this remedy on their patients and had seen "almost miraculous and instantaneous recovery." The antibacterial, clarithromycin, could be an attempt to prevent secondary bacterial infections like pneumonia, but evidence for that is limited. Budesonide is a steroid with a variety of uses, but it's not clear whether or how it might help someone with measles.

Vitamin A, at any dose, does not protect against measles and no parent should give to their child vitamin A in hopes of preventing measles. Vitamin A is a micronutrient, meaning very small amounts are all we need to stay healthy and we get those through a healthy diet and in recommended doses



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of over-the-counter multivitamin supplements. Larger doses of vitamin A given over prolonged periods are very dangerous and can lead to vomiting, blurry vision, headaches, and, when more severe, liver damage and coma.

It is recommended that under a doctor's supervision, children infected with measles be given vitamin A once a day for two days to reduce the severity of the illness. But that is a small amount in a medical setting.

Falsehoods aren't just a nuisance—they have real consequences. People may experience short-term symptom relief that masks a severe infection, delaying life-saving care. This has already happened at least once in this outbreak. There's also growing concern about them poisoning themselves due to overdosing on vitamin A. Doctors in West Texas are seeing measles patients whose illnesses have been complicated by an alternative therapy endorsed by vaccine skeptics including Secretary Kennedy. One of those supplements is cod liver oil containing vitamin A, which Kennedy has promoted as a near miraculous cure for measles. Physicians at Covenant Children's Hospital in Lubbock, Texas, say they've now treated a handful of unvaccinated children who were given so much vitamin A that they had signs of liver damage.

Secretary Kennedy has centered his response to the outbreak on vitamin A, even suggesting that it could work "as a prophylaxis." If people have the mistaken impression that you have an either-or choice of MMR vaccine or vitamin A, you're going to get a lot of kids unnecessarily infected with measles.

Vitamin A is most useful for measles support in people who have a specific deficiency, and studies suggesting its use mainly draw on evidence from low-income countries where that deficiency is common. Vitamin A has an important role in immunity and vision. It's fat-soluble, so when someone takes too much, it can accumulate in organs like the liver. Excess vitamin A can cause dry skin and eyes, blurry vision, bone thinning, skin irritation, liver damage and other serious issues. In pregnant women, excess vitamin A can lead to birth defects.

<https://alpinecountyca.gov/516/Public-Health-Briefs>

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/measles.aspx>

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