Dear Legislator:

As the 2019 Novel Coronavirus has made clear, infectious disease outbreaks can occur without warning, spread quickly, and create a global public health emergency in the absence of a vaccine. At least 813 people have died, over 37,000 have been infected, and millions more are unable to proceed normally with their daily lives.1 Schools, businesses, transit systems, and even the global economy have been noticeably disrupted. Containing the outbreak is expected to cost over $675 million.2

Dozens of severe, highly infectious diseases like polio and measles no longer present similar catastrophic risk thanks to strong community vaccination requirements. However, if we allow immunization rates to slip even a few percentage points, the possibility of an outbreak grows. A recent measles outbreak in Samoa resulted in 5,697 cases and 83 deaths after first-dose measles vaccination rates dropped from 90% to 31% in just five years.3,4

Recent outbreaks reinforce the need to uphold current vaccine requirements that defend Texas communities against vaccine-preventable disease.

We invite you to review the enclosed educational materials and videos from the Texas Medical Association’s Me&My Doctor blog series:

- [How Do Vaccines Prevent Us from Getting Sick?](#) (Dec. 2019)
- [Texas Physicians Explain Herd Immunity Needed to Fight Contagious Disease Hotspots](#) (Jan. 2020)
- [I Got My Shot; Why Am I Sick? Physicians Answer Why.](#) (Feb. 2020)

Our coalition stands ready to serve as a resource on this topic. We look forward to working with you to keep Texans healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

John Carlo, MD  
Chair, Texas Public Health Coalition

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How Do Vaccines Prevent Us from Getting Sick?

Editor's Note: This video is part of a monthly Texas Medical Association series highlighting infectious diseases that childhood and adult vaccinations can prevent. MeAndMyDoctor.com posts a video about a different disease/public health issue each month. Some of the topics featured include: Flu, Measles, Pneumococcal disease, Human papillomavirus (HPV), Chickenpox and shingles, Pertussis (whooping cough), Hepatitis A, Rubella (also known as German measles), Rotavirus, Polio, Mumps, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, and Meningococcal B, Diphtheria, pregnancy and vaccines, benefits of vaccinations, and more.

TMA designed the series to inform people of the facts about these diseases and to help them understand the benefits of vaccinations to prevent illness. Visit the TMA website to see news releases and more information about these diseases, as well as physicians' efforts to raise immunization awareness.

Video: How Vaccines Work

Most people choose to vaccinate to protect themselves from infectious diseases. But many may not know how vaccines actually work.

It starts with the immune system, which defends our bodies from bacteria and viruses that can make us sick. After a physician or other health care worker gives someone a shot, the patient's body believes the vaccine is an invading disease, so it builds a resistance against it. This prepares the body for any future encounters a person may have with a real disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccines contain a small number of weakened or dead antigens, the parts of germs that cause a person's immune system to activate. After a person receives a vaccine, the key proteins in their immune system (called antibodies) will recognize that antigen and attack it if ever enters the body again.

Scientists make vaccines from a weakened or dead version of a germ, so people are highly unlikely to get sick after getting vaccinated.

Historians believe the idea of vaccinating emerged in Asia and Africa before the 18th century, from a practice called variolation. The technique exposed a healthy person to an infected person's smallpox blister via an open wound or by inhaling through the nose. Many people who underwent variolation avoided smallpox, but several got sick and died.

In the late 1700s, English physician Edward Jenner introduced the procedure we now know as vaccination after learning that dairy maids who got the cowpox virus from infected cows were immune to the highly contagious smallpox virus. He successfully injected an 8-year-old boy with matter from a cowpox blister and later, smallpox, to find the boy did not get sick from either virus. Mr. Jenner coined the new practice vaccination from the Latin word
“vacca”, which means “cow”. Vaccination quickly became a widespread approach to disease prevention.

Doctors today want patients to understand how vaccines work so they can take steps in protecting themselves from preventable diseases. The chart below answers common questions about vaccines.

![Vaccination Chart](image)

| Science: Vaccines Do Not Cause Autism, But Physicians... | Pregnant, or Will Be Soon? Vaccinate to Protect... | Vaccines During Pregnancy Give Double Shot of Protection |

Posted by Me and My Doctor at 10:59 AM.

Labels: Be Wise Immunize, CDC, Child and Adolescent Health, Immunizations, Infectious Diseases, Public Health, Vaccinations, vaccines, variolation

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Texas Physicians Explain Herd Immunity Needed to Fight Contagious-Disease Hotspots

Editor's Note: This video is part of a monthly Texas Medical Association series highlighting infectious diseases that childhood and adult vaccinations can prevent. MeAndMyDoctor.com posts a video about a different disease/public health issue each month. Some of the recent topics featured include benefits of vaccinations, and how vaccines work. Previously we featured posts on Flu, Measles, Pneumococcal disease, Human papillomavirus (HPV), Chickenpox and shingles, Pertussis (whooping cough), Hepatitis A, Rubella (also known as German measles), Rotavirus, Polio, Mumps, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, and Meningococcal B, Diphtheria, and pregnancy and vaccines.

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Video: What's Herd (Community) Immunity? A Physician Explains How It Protects Us

When you vaccinate, you protect not only yourself from contagious disease, you also play a role in protecting those nearest you and the community.

Herd immunity, or community immunity, is the concept of increasing everyone's protection against disease by vaccinating enough people in a community. Austin pediatrician and Texas Medical Association physician leader Ari Brown, MD, describes herd immunity using an umbrella analogy.

"Think of germs like the rain," said Dr. Brown in this TMA video. "When you get vaccinated you're actually putting on a raincoat to protect yourself [from disease-causing antigens]. But the best way to protect yourself is to have an umbrella AND a raincoat. You can't get that umbrella by yourself though. The entire community has to come together to buy that umbrella - and the way they do that is by vaccinating themselves, and that provides best protection for everybody."

Community immunity also shields people who are unable to get vaccinated because they are too young, have certain diseases, or their immunity has worn off.

When most people in a community are immunized, outbreaks like the nationwide measles outbreaks in 2019 are avoided. So many people are vaccinated the disease can't easily spread from person to person.

Many people who reject vaccines, while shielded by community immunity, actually endanger it by creating vaccine-free hotspots, which lead to disease outbreaks. While Texas requires vaccination for enrollment in public schools, some exemptions exist. Texas is one
of 18 states that allows parents to opt of mandatory school vaccinations due to reasons of conscience.

Current Texas hotspots (where lower vaccination rates exist) include Collin, Harris, Tarrant, and Travis Counties – all which have a higher risk of seeing measles break out because community immunity is at risk there.

"So the best way to protect you and your family is to get vaccinated, but make sure that your neighbors and your classmates do the same," Dr. Brown said.

I Got My Shot; Why Am I Sick?

Physicians Answer

Senate Committee Looks at Prescription Drug Abuse

Stand up and be heard. But don't hate your doctor.

Me and My Doctor: Texas Physicians Explain Herd Immunity Needed to Fight Contagious-Disease Hotspots

Tweets by @MeAndMyDoc

MeAndMyDoctor

Vaccines are the best form of protection from infectious diseases, but sometimes vaccinated people still get sick. Why? Austin pediatrician & @texmed physician leader @DavidLakey_MD explains the factors that go into how well a vaccine protects a person.

I Got My Sh...

Editor's Note... meandmydo...

Me&MyDoctor

When you #vaccinate, you protect yourself from contagious disease and also play a role in protecting those nearest you and

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Posted by Me and My Doctor at 2:07 PM

Labels: Be Wise Immunize , Child and Adolescent Health , community immunity , herd immunity , Immunizations , Measles , Preventive Health , Public Health , Texas Medical Association , Vaccinations , vaccine hotspots , vaccines

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I Got My Shot; Why Am I Sick? Physicians Answer Why

Editor's Note: This video is part of a monthly Texas Medical Association series highlighting infectious diseases that childhood and adult vaccinations can prevent. MeAndMyDoctor.com posts a video about a different disease/public health issue each month. Some of the recent topics featured include how people in vaccinated communities can protect each other from disease, addressing the autism myth, how vaccines work, and why to vaccinate before and during pregnancy. Previously we featured posts on Flu, Measles, Pneumococcal disease, Human papillomavirus (HPV), Chickenpox and shingles, Pertussis (whooping cough), Hepatitis A, Rubella (also known as German measles), Rotavirus, Polio, Mumps, Tetanus, Hepatitis B, and Meningococcal B, Diphtheria, and pregnancy and vaccines.

TMA designed the series to inform people of the facts about these diseases and to help them understand the benefits of vaccinations to prevent illness. Visit the TMA website to see news releases and more information about these diseases, as well as physicians' efforts to raise immunization awareness.

Video: I Got My Shot (Vaccine), So Why Did I Get Sick?

Vaccines are the best form of protection from infectious diseases. However, sometimes vaccinated people still get sick, causing them to wonder why. According to physicians, there are several factors that go into how well a vaccine protects an individual.

Most vaccinations have high rates of effectiveness, meaning greater than 90% protection. Others, like the vaccine against influenza, are less predictable. Austin internist, pediatrician, and infectious disease specialist David L. Lakey, MD, says developing a flu vaccine is an imperfect process– for valid reasons.

"Every year the [flu] virus changes, and scientists in laboratories have to try to figure out what the next strain of influenza will be, make the most educated guess, put those strains into the vaccine – and sometimes it's not a perfect match," said Dr. Lakey, who serves on TMA's Council on Science and Public Health.

People with specific medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer have a harder time fighting diseases and are a higher risk of developing severe complications. Older people are also more prone to getting sick.

Adults are strongly advised to keep up with vaccinations because their immunity built up from childhood vaccines diminishes – a concept called waning immunity.

People who come down with the flu can experience fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue, and vomiting. The longer influenza is left untreated, the greater the risk for complications like pneumonia – or even death.
The flu shot can reduce those symptoms even if people get sick. The shot can prevent people from getting so sick they have to go to the hospital.

Dr. Lakey stresses that when more people get vaccinated, society is better protected from preventive diseases like influenza. So-called community immunity "can decrease the number of people that are transmitting the virus and decrease the number of individuals that are going to infect me, my family, your family, from that circulating virus."

That’s another reason to get your shots; not only to protect yourself, but to help protect others around you who might be defenseless.

You might also like:

- Texas Physicians Explain Herd Immunity Needed to Fight ...
- A Parent's Survival Guide to the Anti-Vax Movement
- Protect Yourself and Others Against Influenza: Get a Flu ...

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