

# Why Community Immunity Is So Important

By: *Providence Health Team*

The importance of vaccinations has long been contested as being unnecessary and unsafe. While cases of negative side effects for individuals vary, the impact of vaccinations on a community cannot be denied. When a large portion of a community is vaccinated, the chances of the disease spreading among neighbors and family members are significantly diminished. This large-scale effort to immunize the community is regularly referred to as herd immunity.

## **Here's why it's so important:**

Rejecting vaccines puts the “herd” in danger. In recent years, more and more parents have chosen to [forego vaccinations](#) for their children. The root of this hesitation can most likely be traced back to anecdotal evidence of vaccine-induced side effects such as autism. While this would be cause to worry, research suggests that vaccines are only likely to result in mild side effects like fatigue, headache, and joint pain. Vaccines serve to protect against the spread of infectious and often dangerous diseases and if enough people refuse the inoculations, their neighbors are unfortunately left vulnerable.

It blocks the spread of reproductive disease. Reproductive disease refers to how many people one infected person can spread a disease to. The more contagious the disease is, the more people need to get vaccinated to ensure safety. When vaccination rates fall, the number of new cases increases. Did you know measles is known as one of the most common and most contagious diseases and kills around 160,000 people globally? In order to be protected against infectious pathogens like this, at least 95 percent of the community needs to be vaccinated.

It protects those who can't be vaccinated. The great thing about herd immunity is that not every single member of the community needs to be vaccinated in order to be protected. Children who are too young to be vaccinated or individuals who can't be vaccinated due to age, health conditions, or [immune system](#) problems become “immune” because the disease is contained by the other 90 to 95 percent who have chosen to get vaccinated.

Vaccines help you avoid additional medical costs. Getting vaccinated now will help you avoid crippling hospital bills, doctor visits and medications down the road. Besides being a personal burden, not getting vaccinated could have detrimental effects on your community and loved ones. In 2011, two hospitals in Arizona had to spend over \$750,000 to treat a 14-person outbreak and contain the disease. This is just one example of how rejecting vaccinations can impact your community.

To protect yourself, your family and your community, consider getting vaccinated. The side effects are minimal, and the positive effects can be enough to stop an entire population from falling ill and avoiding mortality. As with any medical decision, [contact your health professional](#) for more information on important vaccines and to determine which ones are right for you.

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