



**FREMONT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT**

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Vaccinations Save Lives

Today, there are outbreaks of measles in Oregon, Washington, New York, Texas, and Illinois individual cases in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Kentucky, and New Jersey. Over 206 people had been confirmed to have the disease in 2019 alone - a threefold increase from the same period in 2010. Believe it or not, measles was declared eradicated from the United States in 2000. Now we hear daily of families afraid to leave home with their newborn for fear of contracting the disease.

These outbreaks are a blunt reminder of how vulnerable we are in Colorado. For the 2017-18 school year, Colorado's vaccination rate for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) ranked 49th out of the 49 states, with a coverage rate of 88.7 percent for two doses of MMR.¹ In Fremont County, according to the Colorado Immunization Information System, residents ages 1-20 are at a coverage rate of 66 percent. We need 95 percent coverage to prevent a measles outbreak. While the difference may seem small, it's the difference between sickness and health for infants, those who have compromised immune systems, and pregnant women.

Vaccines are one of the greatest successes of our time – reducing illness, medical costs, and emotional heartbreak for countless families. Vaccines have eradicated smallpox, nearly eliminated polio, and reduced disability and suffering from infections caused by measles, diphtheria, and whooping cough. Yet, vaccines are victims of their own success.

Across the country we are seeing a rise in “vaccine hesitancy.” That is, families whose children do not receive immunizations within the schedule recommended by scientific research. This is not surprising, given that most of us have never had to witness the devastating consequences of diseases such as measles and mumps. But the impact of these illnesses can be life-changing. For example, mumps can cause infertility in boys; rubella can cause birth defects; and 1 in 4 people with measles will require hospitalization.² In 2017 in Colorado, 9,424 children were taken to the hospital because they were ill from a disease that could have been prevented by vaccination.³

Some parents have concerns about vaccines because they're trying to do the best for their child and are, rightfully, being cautious about decisions that will affect them. This is every parent's job, after all. The truth is, vaccination saves lives; approximately 33,000 each year in the U.S. alone.⁴ Some of the best minds in science have and continue to work on vaccines to make them safe and effective – for the community, and for their own children.

In the end, we all pay the cost of controlling the spread of illness from diseases that can be prevented by a vaccine. Washington State declared a state of emergency in response to their measles outbreak in order to receive federal funding to respond; it's cost over \$1 million so far. Schools pay a cost to



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continue to meet education standards despite children being absent for weeks. And, most importantly, immunocompromised individuals and their families pay the cost of being vulnerable to severe illness.

For immunizations to protect each of us, all of us who can get fully vaccinated, must. Diseases quickly become outbreaks when we don't work together. High rates of vaccination are needed to keep our families, friends, neighbors, and communities healthy and safe. We are privileged to have access to vaccinations - an opportunity that many others do not. As a part of this community, we have a responsibility to each other. We've eradicated disease before; let's do it again.

1. [MMWR Kindergarten Report](#)
2. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
3. [Colorado Immunization Coalition](#)
4. [Immunize for Good](#)