



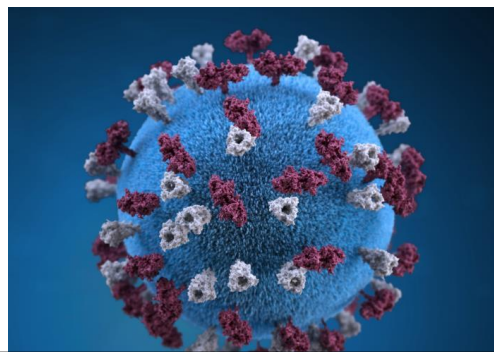
GET SMART Newsletter

July 2017

The Importance of Vaccinations

By: Deputy Secretary Loren Robinson, MD, MSHP, FAAP, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Pa. Dept. of Health

In the middle of February of this year, I received an emergent email stating that there were three confirmed and four suspected cases of mumps at the Penn State University Park campus. As a pediatrician and an internist, I remember reading about mumps in medical school. However, with wide immunization practice, diseases like the mumps had become almost unheard of in the United States. After receiving this email, I was immediately concerned. Mumps is an infectious disease, and it takes two weeks for someone to experience increased immunity after getting a shot.



Measles Virus Particle
Source: CDC Public Health Image Library

People who live in communities of close proximity, like college students, are more likely to contract a virus like mumps. They go to class and do activities in groups, as well as exchange saliva through sharing food or drinks, making it even more likely for them to get infected.

Pennsylvania isn't the only state experiencing the mumps outbreak -- in 2017 alone, 42 states have reported mumps infections!

Similar to how one small fire can be the beginning of a wild forest fire, certain infectious diseases can spread if even just one person is infected. However, if enough people in the community are immunized and protected from contracting these deadly viruses, then herd immunity is produced because the chain of transmission is interrupted. If more people are immune, the

likelihood of an infected person encountering someone susceptible to getting mumps is low. Since the U.S. started the mumps vaccination program in 1987, mumps cases have decreased by more than 99 percent!

As advised by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), our team at the Department of Health changed school immunization regulations in March 2017 so that children in the commonwealth are adequately protected against potential outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases.

As of Aug. 1, 2017, every child must have the required medically-appropriate vaccines or a plan to complete those vaccines or risk exclusion from school. You can still get a medical, religious or philosophical exemption, but these still need to be completed by the first five days of the start of the school year. There are also several changes to vaccine-specific requirements, so that Pa. regulation is consistent with CDC immunization schedules.

This was a slow and tedious process, as we started revising these regulations in October 2015, but we worked hard to ensure current student vaccinations. With up-to-date vaccination schedules and a high percentage of herd immunity, we can keep everyone healthy, especially those who can't get vaccines because of allergies or autoimmune diseases.

Kid's Corner: Word Scramble

1. AEYHTLH _____

Hint: You want to live this kind of lifestyle.

2. EGRSM _____

Hint: These can live on your hands and make you sick.

3. SRIVU _____

Hint: You should not take antibiotics for this type of infection.

4. TBIECRAA _____

Hint: You should take antibiotics for this type of infection.

5. NUIEMM _____

Hint: This system in your body helps fight off germs from making you sick.

6. AICCNEV _____

Hint: This is the topic of this month's newsletter!

7. ECLL _____

Hint: These cover your entire body, and you cannot see them with just your eye.

8. IEENSCC _____

Hint: This subject you learn in school.

9. CIMNIEDE _____

Hint: You take this when you are sick to make you feel better.

10. ISKC _____

Hint: If you don't wash your hands of germs, you can feel this way.

Answers: 1. HEALTHY 2. GERMS 3. VIRUS 4. BACTERIA 5. IMMUNE 6. VACCINE 7. CELL 8. SCIENCE 9. MEDICINE
10. SICK

Source: [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](http://www.childrenshospital.org)

**Countdown to Get
Smart Competition
2017!**

105 Days



Enter at:
www.KnowWhenToSayNo.org

What's on your summer
reading list?
Let us know at
knowwhentosayno@pa.gov.

If you would like more information, please contact us. To unsubscribe, email knowwhentosayno@pa.gov.