

Another reminder to get vaccinated!

By ACSH Staff — April 15, 2013

If you need another reminder about the importance of vaccinations, just look to the events of this past weekend. A Wisconsin college student and a Los Angeles man [died of](#) ^[1] meningitis, and the New York City Department of Health issued an alert stating that five measles cases occurred in Borough Park, Brooklyn this past month in children who had not been vaccinated. They also followed up saying that a large number of exposures occurred throughout the community and more cases are expected.

In both cases, officials have taken the opportunity to note the importance of getting vaccinated. In the case of meningitis, colleges recommend that incoming students receive the meningitis vaccination, as risk is greatest in crowded settings, such as dormitories. And the AIDS Healthcare Foundation is now offering free meningitis vaccines. Marilyn Michaels, nurse epidemiologist for Gundersen Lutheran Health System says it goes further than meningitis. Parents need to be aware. There s a whole group of immunizations now for the adolescent population.

The New York City Department of Health has also taken this opportunity to re-emphasize the importance of adhering to the vaccination guidelines for children. A child should receive the first dose of MMR at age 12 months and the second dose at age 4 to 6 years. And they also stress the importance of not delaying vaccinations.

But in both of these cases, the question may arise as to where parents are getting the information that influences their decision as to whether or not to vaccinate their children. According to a [small study](#) ^[2] conducted by researchers at Texas State University, friends and family could be a key influence. In fact, the study found that among those parents who chose not to have their children vaccinated, friends and family (as opposed to physicians and pharmacists) were their main source of advice. Emily Brunson, researcher and assistant professor of anthropology at Texas State University, also pointed out that campaigns to increase vaccination rates often target pediatricians, but maybe it s time to consider a broader approach. She believes that media campaigns and other approaches that reach the general public, not just parents, might work better.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross gives his take on choosing to vaccinate a child: "In the case of children's vaccines, the risks of getting the vaccine are essentially zero. The real risk of an adverse reaction from the vaccine occurs in less than 5 percent of patients and involves local redness on the site of the injection or perhaps a day or two of low grade fever. Comparing that to the risks of getting the disease which can cause severe illness for days or weeks or death, every child should get the routine recommended vaccinations and a non-vaccinated child going into a school environment runs the risk of getting the disease and then spreading it to other children."

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Links

[1] http://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/experts-stress-vaccines-after-student-s-death/article_29b94210-a4bf-11e2-b1de-001a4bcf887a.html

[2] <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/news/articles/2013/04/15/parents-who-veto-vaccinations-often-seek-like-minded-opinions>