

Study shows that measles vaccine may help to protect against other infections

By ACSH Staff — May 8, 2015



We've written several times about the easily-preventable [Disneyland measles outbreak](#) [1] that occurred earlier this year. A total of 147 people were sickened in the US, and infections also spread to Mexico and Canada. The outbreak once again sparked the debate about vaccinations. With most people having *finally* abandoned their mistaken belief happily encouraged by quacks and supplement salesmen that vaccines cause autism (they don't), anti-vaxxers instead resorted to disputing that measles is not all that dangerous anyway.

Measles is, in fact, a [dangerous disease](#) [2], and aside from the risk of death and disability, it can lead to other health problems. Even after the illness subsides, it was previously believed that the immune system was weakened for weeks or months, putting people (especially small children and babies) at increased risk for other potentially fatal infections as well. But now, scientists have found that this period of vulnerability extends for up to three years yet another reason why the measles vaccination is so important.

In the [latest study](#) [3], authors led by Michael Mina, a medical student at Emory University, analyzed measles cases and death rates from other infections before and after widespread measles campaigns in the United States, England, Wales, and Denmark. They found that after vaccinations, measles cases declined in all the countries, as expected. But deaths from other infectious diseases dropped as well for up to three years. They concluded that this was because the measles virus caused the body to forget some of the immunity it had developed to fight other contagions. By getting vaccinated to prevent measles, you preserve your ability to fight off all of these other infections, said Mina.

The study was published online today in *Science*. The authors write, Our data provide an explanation for the long-term benefits of measles vaccination in preventing all-cause infectious disease an added bonus to preventing a disease that still causes almost 150,000 deaths globally per year.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/05/08/study-shows-that-measles-vaccine-may-help-to-protect-against-other-infections>

Links

[1] <http://acsh.org/2015/01/disneylands-measles-outbreak-continues-spread-100-percent-connected-anti-vaccine-movement/>

[2] <http://www.vox.com/2015/1/26/7907707/measles-symptoms-vaccine>

[3] <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/348/6235/694.abstract>