

The Value and Importance of Current West Virginia Compulsory Immunization Laws

- West Virginia ranks among the highest in the U.S. for immunization rates (98% coverage) for children entering school for the first time.
- West Virginia ranks 49th in the U.S. for 2-year old immunization rates with 64.9%, showing that our current laws are effective in improving immunization rates as well as protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- The safety of vaccines is thoroughly studied before they are licensed for public use. There is a strong system in place to help monitor the safety of vaccines.
- Before the measles vaccination program started in 1963, an estimated 3 to 4 million people got measles each year in the United States. Of these, approximately 500,000 cases were reported each year to CDC; of these, 400 to 500 died, 48,000 were hospitalized, and 1,000 developed encephalitis (brain swelling) from measles.
- Before there was a vaccine against mumps, the disease was common in the United States and caused complications such as permanent deafness in children and occasionally, encephalitis, which could result in death, although very rarely.
- Rubella is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Young children who get rubella usually have a mild illness. The most serious complication of rubella infection is the harm it can cause a pregnant woman's unborn baby. In fact, women infected with rubella early in pregnancy have a 1 in 5 chance of having problems with the pregnancy.
- California used the West Virginia model to improve their immunization rates following the Disneyland measles outbreak in 2015. Other states including Kentucky and Virginia have been working towards similar legislation, currently making West Virginia the ideal model for compulsory immunization laws.



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