

Vaccine Debate:

Politicians Endangering the Lives of Floridians

By Tracy Rippon

October 1, 2025

The recent announcement concerning the removal of vaccine requirements in Florida will endanger the lives of Floridians, especially children, older adults, and immunocompromised individuals. The [Florida surgeon general](#) has confirmed the decision to recommend removal of vaccine mandates was not based on any scientific data. This is alarming since vaccine rates are dropping and diseases like measles, varicella (chicken pox), and pertussis (whooping cough) are staging comebacks. This article will review what harms occur when vaccine rates fall by highlighting a vaccine-preventable disease with current data for Florida.

According to the Florida Department of Health, vaccine-preventable diseases in Florida are at the highest point in decades. Pertussis (whooping cough) is one of these. Pertussis bacteria are highly contagious and release toxins that damage the airways. The symptoms are more severe in children under 5 due to the smaller size of children's airways. Children can experience a "whooping" cough, difficulty breathing, seizures, brain damage, and/or death. Infected individuals can spread pertussis for a couple of weeks from the start of an infection. With such a long time for contagion, adults who typically have mild symptoms (typically a persistent cough) can infect others without even realizing they have pertussis. Vaccination for pertussis only confers immunity for 5-10 years, so boosters are recommended for the adult population in order to protect vulnerable populations such as young children and immunocompromised individuals.

Fortunately, a pertussis vaccine has been available for over 100 years, so not many people know the history of pertussis or have experienced the disease. That is about to change. Cases are rising wherever vaccination rates are falling. One only has to search the internet for recent videos to see the effects. [Click here](#) to see a current news story of a hospitalized newborn infant, who was too young to be vaccinated (vaccinations start at 8 weeks).

Sadly, rates of pertussis are already rising in Florida. There were 150 cases in April 2025 (click here for [latest data available](#)). This is alarming considering the 5-year average is less than 20 cases per month. Although rates of pertussis vary across counties, rates in southwest Florida are higher than average. Vaccines are the most effective means to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases like pertussis and most effective when herd immunity is present. If enough people are vaccinated, then the vulnerable are also protected. [Florida doctors](#) are already sounding the alarm: if vaccines are not mandated in Florida, insurance companies may not be required to cover them, raising costs for everyone and creating barriers that will lower vaccination rates further. Florida politicians are making decisions against medical evidence that will cause harm to our most vulnerable Floridians. People who opt not to vaccinate are putting the health of others at risk since we are unlikely

to have herd immunity without the mandate. Speak up loudly and advocate for population immunity to make our schools and other places young children mingle safe.