

# Politicians debate vaccines as US faces measles outbreak

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US President Barack Obama and American health authorities appealed to the public to vaccinate their children as the country faces an outbreak of measles due to some parents believing vaccines against deadly diseases are dangerous.

Considered eradicated from the US in 2000, measles re-emerged in December in an outbreak clustered around the Disneyland amusement park in California.

Since then, 102 cases of measles have been reported in 14 states according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"We are very concerned by the growing number of people who are susceptible to measles and the possibility that we could have a large outbreak in this country as a result," head of the CDC Tom Frieden said over the weekend while encouraging parents to vaccinate their [children](#).

Measles causes fever and rash and in severe cases can lead to pneumonia or brain swelling. The disease is highly contagious because it is transmitted through the air.

The United States had 644 cases of measles in 2014, a record number since 2000. There were 173 cases in 2013.

The resurgence of the disease in the US coincides with a movement of some parents refusing to vaccinate their children.

Many people who don't vaccinate their children say they fear a triple [vaccine](#) for [measles](#), mumps and rubella is responsible for increasing cases of autism—a theory repeatedly disproven by various studies.

Other people refuse vaccination on religious or political grounds.

The controversy dates back to the publication of a now debunked article in the Lancet medical journal in 1998. The media has been heavily criticized for republishing information in the report that was withdrawn in 2010.

## **Beliefs unfounded**

Numerous scientific studies have clearly shown there is no link between vaccines and autism or other health risks.

In 2014, the parents of 79 percent of unvaccinated children asked authorities of their state to be exempt from immunization on the basis of their beliefs, said Anne Schuchat, head of immunization at the CDC.

President Obama tried to convince skeptical parents to ignore unfounded beliefs about vaccines as concerns over the outbreak grow.

"I understand that there are families that, in some cases, are concerned about the effect of vaccinations. The science is, you know, pretty indisputable. We have looked at this again and again. There is every reason to get vaccinated, but there are not reasons to not," Obama said Sunday.

The issue of vaccinations has stirred up the country's political scene, particularly among potential Republican candidates for the 2016 presidential election.

The issue presents challenges for the politicians who do not want to alienate the ultra-conservative electorate who sometimes reject the vaccine.

When asked about the issue, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a moderate Republican, said it was important for parents to have "some measure of choice." His press office later issued a statement saying children should be vaccinated for the disease.

"While I think it's a good idea to take the vaccine, I think that is a personal decision for individuals," said Senator Rand Paul, a doctor and leader among the Tea Party, a more conservative movement.

On the other hand, Speaker of the House or Representatives, Republican John Boehner was very clear on the issue: "I do believe that all children ought to be vaccinated."

The same message was echoed by Republican Senator Marco Rubio: "There is absolutely no medical science or data whatsoever that links those vaccinations to onset of autism or anything of that nature," he said.

"So absolutely, all children in American should be vaccinated."

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