

Low vaccination rates in Texas could result in measles epidemics

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With almost 45,000 children in Texas with nonmedical or "reasons of conscience" exemptions to school immunization laws, an expert at Baylor College of Medicine outlines the possibility of diseases such as measles reappearing in the region. His perspective was published today in the journal *PLOS Medicine*.

"I'm worried that we're likely to see measles returning to Texas within the next couple of years," said Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital Endowed Chair in Tropical Pediatrics. "Measles remains one of the great killers of children worldwide, and at one time before widespread vaccination measles was among the leading causes of death."

Hotez noted that the introduction of the [measles vaccine](#) in 1963 as well as national eradication campaigns over many years helped to eliminate measles deaths in the country. However, since measles is one of the most highly transmissible human infectious disease agents known, the vaccine coverage within a population needs to be high, about 90 to 95 percent, to prevent an outbreak. Hotez said that with the decreased vaccination rates in Texas, certain counties are close to going below the 95 percent coverage rate necessary to help prevent outbreaks. Moreover some private schools in Texas have only 70 percent vaccine coverage or even less.

He calls for a measure similar to the one in California where the state

Legislature closed the loopholes that allow for nonmedical exemptions to vaccines, which could prove to be lifesaving.

More information: Peter J. Hotez. Texas and Its Measles Epidemics, *PLOS Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002153](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002153)

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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