

'The number of people avoiding vaccination is a concern': Public health expert discusses measles

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Dr. Sophie Martucci is an expert in Public Health from the School of Life Sciences at the University of Warwick. As part of her agents of infectious disease module and science communication model, she covers

the MMR Vaccine and the unnecessary controversy around the vaccination.

"Measles is an [airborne virus](#) which spreads very easily through coughs and sneezes of infected people," she explains. It is highly contagious, so most people are vaccinated for it, along with mumps and rubella, as a child.

Dr. Martucci says, "The number of people avoiding vaccination is a concern." She continued, "Unfortunately, historical, erroneous claims, incorrectly linking the vaccine to autism still prevent some parents from vaccinating their child, despite the study being debunked and the person leading those highly flawed studies no longer allowed to practice medicine in the country for fabricating the data."

There have also subsequently been many studies from many different research groups showing that the MMR vaccine (which is used to treat measles, mumps, and rubella) is safe to be used in the majority of the population.

"There are also concerns about using vaccines through worries they contain pork or porcine gelatin. This fact is true in some cases—gelatin is used in some vaccines, for example, as a stabilizing agent. However, to address the need for vaccines to not contain [animal products](#) such as pork gelatin, there are now vaccines developed including the MMR VaxPro and Priorix, which people can request instead."

Dr. Martucci explains, "It is often thought that measles just gives people a fever and a rash which will clear up after a week or so. However, complications can be incredibly severe with this virus, especially in more vulnerable groups of the population like children and [pregnant women](#) as well as those who are immunosuppressed."

"As many as 1 in 20 children who catch measles can end up developing pneumonia, with 1 in every 1000 children dying from complications involving their respiratory system or neurological problems. Pregnant women who contract measles can increase their risk of premature births and stillbirths, too. So things can be a lot more serious than just a rash and a temperature."

"Due to the significant health risks measles can lead to, there are going to be several problems for the public to face. An increase in [hospital admissions](#) at a time when the hospitals are already over-stretched is likely to be the most significant problem. This is because of how contagious measles is. It is calculated that one person with measles could infect 12-18 other people, just highlighting how far this virus can potentially spread should precautions not be taken."

"Vaccines are an incredibly powerful tool when enough people within the population agree to be vaccinated, enabling us to reach a level of herd immunity to protect those who are vulnerable."

"Anyone who has any questions about getting the MMR vaccine or a [measles vaccine](#) should contact their GP to try and help reduce the spread of this very contagious, potentially lethal, virus around our communities."

Provided by University of Warwick

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