

# German paediatricians demand compulsory vaccinations

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Germany's paediatricians association Wednesday demanded mandatory childhood vaccinations against measles and a range of other diseases in a debate kicked off by the health minister.

"Children have a right to be immunised against potentially deadly

diseases, the law must come," said BVKJ president Thomas Fischbach ahead of government talks on the issue next week.

Health Minister Jens Spahn this week urged compulsory vaccinations in kindergartens and schools against measles, a deadly disease that still flares every year in Germany.

The BVKJ backed the call but also demanded mandatory vaccinations against rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough, mumps and chickenpox.

Measles is more contagious than tuberculosis or Ebola but can be prevented with a vaccine that costs cents.

The World Health Organization has reported that cases worldwide soared nearly 50 percent in 2018, killing around 136,000 people.

The resurgence of the disease in some countries has been linked to medically baseless claims linking the measles vaccine to autism, which have been spread in part on social media by the so-called "anti-vax" movement.

Fischbach stressed that "many claims made by vaccination opponents have been scientifically refuted long ago".

"For example, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations cannot trigger autism—even if such misinformation still circulates on social media," he said in a statement.

"Vaccination opponents, with their scare tactics about side effects, with their conspiracy theories and their rejection of science-based facts, have fought a losing battle."

Although most parents already favour immunisations, the BVKJ said, coverage is sometimes patchy and many children miss the second jabs needed to make them effective.

"We need immunisation coverage of over 95 percent to really eradicate diseases," they said. "We need a rule under which non-vaccinated parents get immunised too when they bring in their children."

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