



Jewish Leaders' and Organizations' Views on Vaccination

The United States is currently experiencing **large measles outbreaks** with many of the cases in New York. The NY outbreaks – in **Rockland County, Brooklyn and Queens** – began after Orthodox Jews who were visiting Israel became infected with measles and brought the disease with them to the U.S. They then spread it to communities with pockets of unvaccinated people. (Israel is experiencing a massive outbreak of the disease, with **over 2,000 cases** reported as of late November of last year.)

Following are statements (and related links) from the Jewish community about the importance of vaccinations.

- **The Orthodox Union (OU) and the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) strongly urge all parents to vaccinate their healthy children on the timetable recommended by their pediatrician.** Read their [full statement](#).
- [Open Letter from Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem, to Rav Malkiel Kotler About The Halachic Requirement To Vaccinate.](#) In his letter Rav Sternbuch states “Since it is proven that vaccines are effective to prevent the spread of disease, it is an obligation upon every father to vaccinate his children.” [Read the full letter](#) on The Yeshiva World website.
- **Rav Asher Weiss ,chief halachic authority for Shaarei Tzedek Medical Center in Yerushalayim,** stated “Vaccinating children against preventable diseases has the same halachic necessity for parents as taking them to the doctor for an illness” at a conference on medical ethics in Boro Park. [Read more](#) about Rav Weiss’ comments about vaccinations during the conference.
- **Orthodox Jewish Nurses Association (OJNA) Vaccine Task Force** – The Task Force is headed by Blima Marcus, an ultra-Orthodox oncology nurse at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and an adjunct professor of nursing in Hunter college from Borough Park, Brooklyn. [Listen to Marcus discuss the OJNA Vaccine Task Force.](#)
- A 2005 ruling by the **Conservative movement’s Rabbinical Assembly** allows Jewish day schools to make immunizations compulsory in accordance with halacha (Jewish law). [Read the full ruling: Compulsory Immunization in Jewish Day Schools.](#)
- **Central Hatzolah** has joined with the NYC Health Department and Released a [Letter Calling on the Community to Vaccinate.](#)
- **The Union for Reform Judaism’s (URJ) Resolution on Mandatory Immunization Laws** states “Throughout the history of the Jewish people, one of the most sacred commandments has been *pikuach nefesh*, the idea that the preservation of life takes precedence over almost all other Jewish laws.” They also state “A 1999 CCAR responsum on Compulsory Immunization



(5759.10), finds that vaccines qualify as *refu'ah bedukah*, proven remedies, and are therefore an obligation." The URJ affirms that in the case of mandatory immunizations, *pikuach nefesh* and *refu'ah bedukah* are our guiding principles. Reform Jewish religious tenets prioritize protecting the health of all individuals, the most medically vulnerable members of the community, and the community as a whole, and do not provide a basis for a religious exemption from mandatory immunizations. [Read the full resolution.](#)

- **Are Vaccinations Kosher? – In Judaism, no religious law forbids vaccination, even in cases where the vaccine includes gelatin and/or other non-kosher ingredients.** According to [Rabbi David Samson](#), "There is no prohibition in using medicines which contain forbidden ingredients if they are administered by injection, suppository, enema, medicated bandage, and the like, since they are not eaten." Read the [full answer](#) to this question.

Related Articles

NY Times – Religious Objections to the Measles Vaccine? Get the Shots, Faith Leaders Say

NY Times Opinion – My Fellow Hasidic Jews Are Making a Terrible Mistake About Vaccinations: We should stop dismissing scientific evidence and endangering the lives of our children. – By Moshe Friedman, a Hasidic yeshiva graduate and a father of three.

Kveller – These Amazing Orthodox Nurses Are Fighting Measles in Their Community

Judiasm and Science – A Nice Jewish Shot: Why Vaccinations are Kosher and Required

The Daily Beast – I Didn't Vaccinate My Child—And I Regret It: How I finally discovered that vaccinating your kids is the right thing to do – By Sally Kohn, a Jewish mother.