

C A M P A I G N

..... FOR

ADULT IMMUNIZATION

OPEN LETTER SUPPORTING ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS

Infectious diseases pose a real threat to public health. Unvaccinated adults leave both themselves and others around them vulnerable to dangerous diseases. **Vaccine-preventable diseases kill more US adults annually than either breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, or motor vehicle traffic accidents.**¹ These deaths are easily preventable yet many adults have no idea they need to be immunized.²

Immunizations Can Save Lives and Reduce Healthcare Costs

In addition to morbidity and mortality, vaccine-preventable diseases and related complications also contribute to billions of dollars in direct and indirect costs due to hospitalizations, reduced workplace productivity, and outbreak interventions. Examples of the effects of these diseases follow:

- **HEPATITIS A** is one of the most common vaccine-preventable diseases US adults are exposed to during international travel. Infected adults **lose an average of one month of work and about 15 percent require hospitalization.**³
- **HEPATITIS B** and related liver disease **kill about 5,000 people and cost \$700 million annually**, including healthcare and productivity-related costs.⁴ It is estimated there are approximately 9,400 cases of acute hepatitis B in the US annually.⁵
- **HERPES ZOSTER (SHINGLES)** affects approximately **one million individuals** each year in the US.⁶ **One in three US adults will get shingles in their lifetime** and both the frequency of the disease as well as a very painful condition known as post-herpetic neuralgia increase with age.⁷ **Medical spending on shingles averaged \$566 million per year** from 2003–2005.⁸ As our population ages, we can expect the number of cases to increase — **about 98 percent of US adults have had chickenpox and are, therefore, at risk for shingles.**⁹
- **HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV)** infects **nearly three out of every four women between 14 and 59 years of age.**¹⁰ Seventy percent of cervical cancers are caused by two strains of HPV, both of which are vaccine-preventable.^{11,12} Preventable cases of cervical cancer result in **\$1.7 billion in direct medical costs** each year.¹³ Additionally, males can become infected with HPV and suffer from HPV-related health problems. Each year, nearly 2,000 US males will develop anogenital cancer.¹⁴
- **INFLUENZA (FLU)** can cause **tens of thousands of deaths, more than 200,000 hospitalizations, and over \$10 billion in costs** during a moderately severe seasonal outbreak.^{4,15,16} Direct medical costs of influenza alone are estimated at \$8.7 billion each year in the US.¹⁷
- **MEASLES** is one of the most contagious diseases known: **it can remain in the air, continuing to infect individuals, for up to two hours.**^{18,19} Complications from measles are more common among adults than children. Approximately **20 percent** of those with measles experience one or more complications including **pneumonia, encephalitis, seizures, and death.**²⁰ After controlling the disease for over a decade, the US is once again experiencing outbreaks. Over 200 cases from 31 states were reported in 2011.²¹
- **MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE** affects approximately **1,500 US individuals each year—many of whom are college-age.**²² About **one in 10 infected will die** (even with rapid and appropriate treatment), and **two in 10 survivors will have serious long-term and permanent consequences** including hearing loss, brain damage, renal failure, or limb amputations.²³

- **MUMPS** has been the cause of a **number of large US outbreaks** in 2006, 2009, and 2010. Serious complications of mumps are more common among adults than children, and **can include infections of the brain and spinal cord, arthritis, kidney and pancreatic problems, deafness, and inflammation of the ovaries and testicles, and in rare cases, male sterility.**^{24,25}
- **PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING COUGH)** is on the rise. **More than 27,000 US cases were reported in 2010, over 6,600 of which were in adults** (four percent were hospitalized).²⁶ During the first half of 2012, increased pertussis outbreaks have been reported in a majority of states.²⁷ The total societal cost of pertussis (contact treatment and indirect costs) is estimated at **almost \$2,500 per adult case.**²⁸ The disease can lead to pneumonia as well as exposure of infants who are at greatest risk of death from pertussis. Waning immunity among adults in recent years has had deadly consequences among infants: in 2010, 25 infants died from pertussis.²⁹
- **PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE** can cause blood and brain infections (invasive) as well as pneumonia. In 2009, there were **43,500 cases of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD)**, including **about 5,000 deaths.**²⁶ Eighty-five percent of IPD cases and nearly all deaths are among adults.²⁶
- **RUBELLA (GERMAN MEASLES)** has been declared eliminated from the US; however, the disease can still be brought into America from other countries.³⁰ The disease can be debilitating especially for infected pregnant women as their **unborn babies are at risk of serious birth defects** from rubella including **heart defects, mental retardation, liver and spleen damage, blindness, and deafness.**³¹
- **TETANUS (LOCKJAW)** is **fatal in 10-12 percent of cases**; however, almost all cases reported are in people who were never vaccinated or who have not had their booster every 10 years.³²
- **VARICELLA (CHICKENPOX)** is **25 times more likely to result in death in adults than in children**, although the disease itself is much more common in children than adults.^{33,34} About 90 percent of unvaccinated household contacts of an infected person will catch the disease.³⁴

Call to Action

The toll in human lives and suffering, increasing outbreaks of diseases that had once been controlled, and the huge economic costs, highlight the need for adult immunization awareness. As members of the Campaign for Adult Immunization, we, the undersigned organizations, support adult immunization as the safest and most effective way to prevent infectious diseases in the US. We support the development, implementation, and sustainability of policies and programs that make immunizations affordable and accessible for all US adults.

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