

What Actually Works to Get People to Vaccinate?

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Does public shaming work? Being kind and non-judgmental? [Banning people from public places](#) and [fining parents \\$1,000](#)?

As communities deal with the United States' [worst measles outbreaks in 25 years](#) and the country faces losing its “[measles-free](#)” status, Americans are [debating how](#) best to encourage the reluctant to get vaccinated. Measles is an infectious disease that [can be deadly](#) and [has no cure](#) (although some treatments can make the symptoms less severe). So, both during outbreaks and during less critical times, the best bet for preventing the illness from spreading is to get people immunized. The worst measles outbreaks [tend to happen](#) in communities with low vaccination rates, often because many in the community have incorrect beliefs about the measles, mumps, and rubella, or MMR, vaccine.

It's clearly possible to improve vaccination rates. But the science of what works—to assuage unfounded fears and increase how many people get shots—is still in its early days. In the U.S. and abroad, health officials have [tried tons](#) of different strategies. Sometimes they've even [studied whether they were effective](#). In many cases, however, it's hard to identify the principles for designing an effective get-vaxxed program, particularly for people who don't vaccinate not because they're busy or poor, but because they oppose vaccination.