

# IGNORE THE ANTI-VAXXERS, STOP THE MEASLES VIRUS

There are two things you need to know about measles beyond the facts that they are exceptionally contagious, surprisingly common and potentially deadly, especially to infants and young children.

You should know a safe, effective vaccine can almost always protect us all against this proven scourge.

And then you should realize that partly because anti-vaxxers have convinced more and more people to refuse this vaccination, this dangerous virus is making an unexpected, entirely unwanted comeback around the world.

This should not be happening. In the early 1960s an estimated 2.6 million people around the world died each year from measles. Thanks to vaccines that have been available since 1963, cases of measles trended downward until 2016. Since then, sadly, the virus has been on a tear, alarming not only health officials but those who have personally suffered the heartbreaking consequences.

The World Health Organization recently warned efforts to halt the spread of measles are "backsliding" and that cases of the illness worldwide leapt by 50 per cent last year. While all the 2018 data aren't in, the WHO said it had been informed of 229,000 reported cases, compared to 170,000 in 2017.

Pneumonia, severe diarrhea and vision loss were among the serious consequences for those who contracted measles. Even worse were the 136,000 deaths from measles reported to the WHO last year from around the world.

As might be expected, the virus ravaged developing countries such as Chad, Sierra Leone and Madagascar, which has reported 922 deaths in the past four months alone. But it's also bad in Europe, which in 2018 experienced the highest number of measles cases in the past 20 years.

Reports of measles are surging in the United States, too, in New York State and Washington State, the latter which reported 54 cases this month. The fears are that neighbouring British Columbia could also be vulnerable to an outbreak. Indeed, health experts in Canada say this entire country could experience an increased number of measles cases.

Is all this scaring you? If so, good. The reason measles are becoming more common is that fewer people are being vaccinated against the disease. The most effective way to prevent outbreaks of measles is to have 95 per cent or more of the population inoculated against the virus.

But immunization rates are plunging in many areas. In Manitoba, only 66 per cent of two-year-olds are up-to-date for all vaccines. In B.C. it's just 73 per cent. In Quebec, 85 per cent - still too low.

And so it goes: After vaccination rates in France, Italy and Romania fell, measles outbreaks soared.

Why these vaccination rates have dropped in such affluent, developed and supposedly educated societies is also obvious. The anti-scientific anti-vaccination movement has found willing converts.

We know that in this era of social media, ever-proliferating sources of information and, of course, intentional fake news, it can be hard to know who to trust.

We would say trust Canada's public health officials and medical authorities. Get informed about the devastating harm measles can cause, especially to the young. And get everyone vaccinated.

TO LEARN HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR OWN CONTENT VISIT THEIFP.CA



## IS THIS A NEWS STORY OR A COLUMN?

WE MUST DRAW A CLEAR LINE BETWEEN NEWS AND OPINION, WRITES MICELI



KAREN MICELI  
Column

*It's about trust. Our relationship with our readers is built on transparency, honesty and integrity. As such, we have launched a trust initiative to tell you who we are and how and why we do what we do. This article is part of that project. This is a column.*

If you look at the top left-hand corner of this page, above the headline, you'll see the word OPINION. That's your first clue.

The article also includes my headshot and a line at the bottom explaining who I am and why I am qualified to write this piece - elements you wouldn't see in a news article.

I think of these as signposts; they let you, the reader, know where we're going. For this piece, our destination is a common

understanding of the types of content you'll find in our newspapers and online at theifp.ca.

They also reinforce our mandate to be transparent and honest in how we present our content, whether online or in the newspaper - in this case drawing a clear line between news and opinion.

Our Torstar Journalistic Standards, which you can read in full at theifp.ca, describes news as "verified information based on the impartial reporting of facts, either observed by reporters or reported and verified from knowledgeable sources. News reports do not include the opinion of the author."

A story labelled CONTRIBUTED was not written by one of our journalists, but submitted by a member of our community.

OPINION articles can include columns based on the author's interpretation and judgments of facts, da-

ta and events. Editorials, which reflect the news organization's position on an issue of public interest, are also opinion. Editorials are not meant to be a neutral presentation of the facts and because they present the newspaper's voice, they do not include an author.

We must also draw a clear line between journalism and advertisement.

There should be no confusion that the boxed ads promoting products and services at local businesses or giving information about goings on at town hall that appear online and in the paper are purchased space. But any paid content that could be confused with a story is labelled as SPONSORED or ADVERTISEMENT.

We welcome your questions and value your comments. Email our trust committee at trust@metroland.com.

*Karen Miceli is managing editor of the Georgetown/Acton Independent and Free Press.*

### ABOUT US

This newspaper, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 80 community publications across Ontario.

This newspaper is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981 Web: www.mediacouncil.ca



newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

### WHO WE ARE

- Publisher**  
Kelly Montague
- Regional General Manager**  
Steve Foreman
- Regional Director of Media**  
Holly Chriss
- Regional Managing Editor**  
Catherine O'Hara
- Managing Editor**  
Karen Miceli
- Distribution Representative**  
Iouliana Polar
- Classified/Real Estate**  
Kristie Pells
- Regional Production Manager**  
Manuel Garcia
- Production**  
Shelli Harrison
- Halton Media General Manager**  
Vicki Dillane

### CONTACT US

**The Independent & Free Press**  
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 905-234-1016  
Fax: 905-873-0398  
**Letters to the editor**  
All letters must be fewer than 200 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters.  
**Delivery**  
For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail lpolar@miltoncanadianchampion.com or call 905-234-1019.

