

## IMMUNIZATION Update

April 18 | 700 words | 3 - minute read



### Question of the week

#### How do you manage vaccine hesitancy?



Recent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) have emerged in areas with low vaccination rates, often linked to vaccine hesitancy. Understanding vaccine hesitancy among diverse populations is crucial for effective public health strategies.

The Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) offers essential guidance in its ["Lessons from the Field: Promoting Vaccine Confidence,"](#) which outlines culturally competent steps for identifying and engaging communities at risk for VPDs, especially during outbreaks. Each step provides key considerations, field experiences, insights from immunization programs and stakeholders, lessons learned and resources to support community engagement efforts.

AIM identifies three key steps to address vaccine hesitancy:

- Being **AWARE**. This involves recognizing individual biases and reactions.
- Gaining **KNOWLEDGE**. To understand whether personal values and beliefs align with actual behaviors regarding equality.
- Developing **SKILLS**. Incorporating cultural competency practices and effective communications within organizations or between individuals.

Other steps recommended by AIM for addressing vaccine hesitancy include:

1. Identify pockets of need.
2. Identify and engage community leaders.
3. Understand concerns and build trust in communities at risk for VPDs.
4. Develop and disseminate culturally relevant messages in partnership with community members.

**Prepare for National Infant Immunization Week with**

**[National Infant Immunization Week](#)** (NIIW), April 22–29, highlights the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrates the achievements of immunization partners. Since 1994, hundreds of communities have joined together during NIIW to celebrate vaccination's crucial role in protecting our children, communities and public health.

CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children stay on track with their well-child appointments and routine vaccinations. Completing the recommended vaccinations by the age of 2 years is the best way to protect young children from **[15 potentially life-threatening diseases](#)**. In light of the challenges of the pandemic years, these messages are more important than ever for families to hear.

CDC makes it simple to plan your NIIW activities by using its **[promotional materials](#)**, including English and Spanish logos, sample social media content, social graphics and key messages. Please share your posts using the hashtag [#ivax2protect](#).

**[View the CDC NIIW Promotional Materials here.](#)**



## Lung distress from SARS-CoV-2 can cause heart inflammation

**[The National Institute of Health reports](#)** that heart tissue analysis revealed a pronounced presence of macrophages, a particular category of immune cells, among individuals afflicted with COVID-19 compared to control samples. These macrophages were more likely to cause inflammation. The same was observed in mice infected with SARS-CoV-2.

This suggests that COVID-19 makes these immune cells more inflammatory in the heart. This damage seems to happen because the immune system reacts to lung problems caused by the virus, not because the virus directly infects the heart.

Finding a way to stop these inflammatory macrophages in the heart could help treat the heart problems caused by COVID-19.

Read the full research article **[here](#)**.



# Invasive meningococcal disease on the rise

CDC reported 422 cases of meningococcal disease in the United States in 2023, the highest number since 2014. This year, CDC reports 143 cases since March 25, an increase of 62 cases from the same time last year.

A specific strain of meningococcus, known as sequence type (ST) 1466, was responsible for most cases (101 out of 148, or 68%) within the serogroup Y category reported in the United States in 2023.



These cases were notably prevalent among the following groups:

- Individuals ages 30–60 years (65%),
- Black or African American individuals (63%), and
- People living with HIV (15%).

Most cases caused by ST-1466 in 2023 presented with symptoms other than meningitis:

- 64% showed signs of bacteremia.
- At least 4% had septic arthritis.
- Out of 94 patients with recorded outcomes, 17 (18%) died, indicating a higher fatality rate compared to an 11% fatality rate for serogroup Y cases between 2017 and 2021.

Healthcare providers are urged to maintain a high level of suspicion for meningococcal disease, particularly among groups experiencing a disproportionate increase in cases. Recognize that patients might not always display typical meningitis symptoms and ensure that everyone recommended for meningococcal vaccination, including those with HIV, is up to date with their vaccinations.

Read the full CDC-issued Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory: [Increase in Invasive Serogroup Y Meningococcal Disease in the United States](#).

## ICYMI: Measles update



The U.S. is currently facing one of the largest measles outbreaks in the past decade, although the number of reported cases is fewer compared to the peak years of 2014 (667 cases) and 2019 (1,274 cases). As of March 21, **64 cases have been reported** across 17 states this year compared to only 58 cases total in 2023.

According to data from the CDC, the number of cases remained relatively low in 2023, with no more than two cases per week reported until mid-September. Since then,

the frequency of reported cases has escalated, with at least two cases documented every week since December 12. [Click or tap here for details](#).

An analysis of measles cases from 2001 to 2023 reveals that the median age of affected individuals is 10 years old. Of note, 69% of cases were among unvaccinated people,



emphasizing the importance of vaccination in preventing measles outbreaks.

People traveling to the U.S. accounted for 20% of cases, and the majority of cases were acquired in the country. Maintaining high vaccination rates remains crucial to curbing the spread of this highly contagious disease.

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