

Message from Sara H. Cody, M.D., Santa Clara County Health Officer **Vaccines and SB277**



The safety and importance of vaccines has been at the forefront of public discussion lately, thanks to the recent enactment of Senate Bill 277. SB277 eliminates personal belief exemptions for schoolchildren, meaning that all children entering child care, kindergarten, and 7th grade are required to be fully vaccinated, unless they have a medical reason documented by a physician that they cannot receive a particular vaccine.

By enacting this law, our legislature and governor have taken powerful and effective action in protecting the health of all Californians. Over time, the law will increase the number of children who are vaccinated and decrease the likelihood of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and whooping cough.

Vaccines are among the most tested and safest medical products we have available. They not only keep individuals healthy, but they also safeguard the health of the whole community. When you vaccinate yourself or your child, you are also protecting vulnerable babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated, as well as children and adults in the community who are unable to be vaccinated because they are undergoing chemotherapy for cancer or have other serious medical problems.

To understand why it's important for everyone to be vaccinated, consider this: in the year 2000, measles was declared "eradicated" in the United States. However, due to declining vaccination rates since then, earlier this year California experienced the most serious measles outbreak in a quarter century:

- 134 Californians were diagnosed with measles; one-fifth required hospitalization.
- The outbreak, which started at Disneyland, spread to seven other states and two countries.
- 26% of those infected in California were under five years of age, including 15 babies too young to be vaccinated.

When we all do our part and vaccinate, we can have peace of mind that our children and communities are better defended against a host of serious diseases. California's new mandatory vaccine law will help keep us moving in the right direction.

For more information about this new law, and vaccines in general, please visit [Vaccinate California](#).