

Ukraine warns measles vaccinations down in pandemic

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An electron micrograph of the measles virus. Credit: CDC/ Courtesy of Cynthia S. Goldsmith

Ukraine on Wednesday warned that many parents were not getting their children vaccinated against infectious diseases such as measles during the coronavirus pandemic, risking a loss of herd immunity.

In recent years, the post-Soviet country has had one of Europe's low vaccination rates, partly due to a vocal anti-vaccination movement. It has experienced major outbreaks of [measles](#).

The health ministry said the measles vaccination rate had dropped significantly this year, increasing the risk of a new outbreak of the [disease](#).

"If we continue to vaccinate at the current rate, by the end of the year we will have 78 percent" of children vaccinated, said Deputy Health Minister Viktor Lyashko. This fell far short of the recommended 95 percent, he said.

Lyashko warned that such a rate would not be enough to develop "collective immunity" against measles.

"If we do not use preventative vaccination, we risk ending up with outbreaks of [vaccine](#)-preventable diseases," he said.

Measles, which is highly contagious, is entirely preventable through a two-dose vaccine.

The vaccination rate dropped significantly in the first months of the year

due to quarantine measures imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

It increased slightly after lockdown restrictions were eased in late May and early June.

Between 2017 and 2019, Ukraine was among the countries most affected by measles.

More than 115,000 Ukrainians contracted the highly [contagious disease](#) and 41 died of it, according to official statistics.

Over the course of 2019, more than 93 percent of one-year-old children were vaccinated against measles.

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