

Friends,

Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst, Dayan of the Agudah, and Rabbi Yonah Reiss, Av Beth Din of the CRC came together this past week to issue an important statement about the need to have children properly vaccinated in our community.

Sadly, we have seen a rash of measles outbreaks in the religious community in North America and Israel, resulting in tragedy. These losses are preventable, but only when each and every one of us ensures that we and those we are responsible for are properly vaccinated. These are matters of life and death for the most vulnerable members of our community - infants, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems. Infants can not be immunized until 12 months. it is the responsibility of the community to protect them, and those with compromised immune systems, through herd immunity.

ה'כסלו תשע"ט

November 13, 2018

Dear members of the Chicago Jewish community:

There has recently been a Measles outbreak in frum communities in Israel, New York and New Jersey. Measles is a serious and very contagious disease that can cause serious illness or death.

We have been informed by medical experts in the community (including Dr. Dov Shapiro and Dr. Martin Borenstein, among many others) that Measles can be spread by an infected individual for up to four days before the appearance of the rash and can still be spread two hours after an infected individual leaves the room.

The best protection against a Measles outbreak is vaccination. However, even individuals who have been vaccinated are at risk to contract the disease if they are exposed to individuals who are carrying the disease.

Therefore, failure to vaccinate endangers not only one's own family but also endangers other members of our community. Immunity wanes as people age and vaccination is only 95% - 97% effective, so truly everyone is at risk during a measles outbreak. For medically vulnerable Jewish children and adults, including infants, the immunosuppressed, and individuals receiving treatment for cancer, Measles can be especially life threatening.

Accordingly, we would like to state the following:

1. It is incumbent upon all members of the community to ensure that they and their children receive the Measles vaccination. Even for those not inclined to vaccinate, this is required of them based on the principle of חמירא סכנתא מאיסורא. In addition, there is an obligation to vaccinate based on the mandate of נשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם. Furthermore, during a time of a Measles outbreak, exposing others to an unvaccinated individual is equivalent to an act of רודף.
2. Nobody has the right to endanger others by not vaccinating their children. This is a violation of לא תעמוד על דם רעך. Furthermore, during a time of a Measles outbreak, exposing others to an unvaccinated individual is equivalent to an act of רודף.
3. We urge all schools, playgroups and shuls to ban any child or adult who has not been vaccinated. This is nothing less than a matter of פיקוח נפש.

Parents are urged to contact their primary care physician or local Board of Health to obtain the necessary MMR vaccination as soon as possible.

Sincerely,


Rabbi Shmuel Fuerst
Dayan of Agudath Yisroel of Illinois


Rabbi Yona Reiss
Av Beth Din, Chicago Rabbinical Council

P.S. Any parent who refuses to vaccinate their child must notify all parents in that child's playgroup or class, as well as the parents of any of their child's friends.

Our leadership is exploring what this means from a policy perspective, but as your rabbi it is my psak that every member of our community must be properly vaccinated before coming in contact with infants and others who may have weakened immune systems in our shul. Our intention is not to stigmatize any person but to ensure that we are creating a safe environment for the vulnerable in our community.

May we continue to build a healthy, strong and vibrant Skokie Valley and fulfill the mitzvah of "ushmartem meod et nafshoteichem," protecting our communal health,

Rav Ari