

FACTS ABOUT EXCLUSIONS

Why are exclusions necessary? What purpose do they serve?

- Per the WAC (Washington Administrative Code) below, exclusions are one of the actions the health officer may choose to implement to stop an outbreak from spreading.
- Exclusions help protect those who are unvaccinated, protect those who are too young to be vaccinated, protect pregnant women who cannot be vaccinated, and prevent spread of disease.

What is the legal authority of the Health Officer regarding exclusions?

- The legal authority of the Health Officer is described in [WAC 246-110-020 Control of contagious disease](#).
- When there is an outbreak of a contagious disease, as defined in WAC 246-110-010, and there is the potential for a case or cases within a school or childcare center, the local health officer, after consultation with the secretary of health or designee if appropriate, shall take all appropriate actions deemed to be necessary to control or eliminate the spread of the disease within their local health jurisdiction including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Closing part or all of the affected school(s) or childcare center(s);
 - (b) Closing other schools or childcare centers;
 - (c) Canceling activities or functions at schools or childcare centers;
- Excluding from schools or childcare centers any students, staff, and volunteers who are infectious, or exposed and susceptible to the disease.

Why are kids not excluded for other vaccine preventable diseases like the flu?

- People with influenza are excluded from school during the time when they have fever and would be infectious to others. This is the same as with mumps or another infectious disease. There are reasons why we don't exclude students who are not vaccinated for flu during flu season that differ from this current mumps outbreak:
 - With the mumps outbreak, mumps is confined to a small number of people in our community at any given point in time (we estimate around 10-20 may be infectious at any one time). In contrast, during flu season, hundreds or thousands of people are infectious at any given time, depending on the point of time in flu season.
 - With the mumps outbreak, the primary risk to kids acquiring mumps is through contact with mumps within schools compared to the community. During flu season, flu is everywhere; schools, daycares, workplaces, and public transportation.
 - Mumps vaccine is a required vaccine in schools and is very effective at preventing mumps (88% with two doses) while influenza vaccine is recommended but not required in school age children and vaccine effectiveness is usually lower (50-60%).

Why are schools not being closed to stop the mumps outbreak?

- School closures are a control measure that could be considered if necessary. Schools may be closed for control of infectious disease in a few circumstances:
 - If absenteeism due to illness in students is high (usually greater than 20-25% overall); and/or
 - If absenteeism in staff is high enough to not be able to conduct normal school services; and/or
 - In the early stages of a pandemic or widespread community outbreak to try to minimize community transmission of disease. Schools as well as public events are activities where people have close contact

with dozens or hundreds of people during the day, resulting in the potential for widespread transmission of an infectious disease.

- School closure is not appropriate for mumps because:
 - There is only a small number of students who have mumps in any given school (a school may have only 1-5 students ill with mumps at any given time).
 - There is only a small number of students who may be excluded because they don't have evidence of immunity (this may be only 1-3% of the student population).
 - For school closure to be effective as a control measure, a school would have to close for at least one incubation period and that would be 25 days for mumps. Closing the school for 25 days would be too disruptive to the entire student population compared to the benefit of school closure.
 - The outbreak can be controlled by keeping sick kids from school while they are infectious and by excluding those at high risk of getting the mumps.

Why can kids immediately go back to school once they get an MMR?

- Although the MMR vaccine may not be fully effective for 14 days following the vaccine, we know the vaccine does *begin* working right away and provides increasing levels of protection against mumps over time. Therefore, students are allowed to return to school right away after receiving an MMR vaccine.

Are exclusions discrimination against unvaccinated kids?

- No, this is not discrimination. Exclusion of susceptible people is a core tenant of infection prevention and outbreak control and is implemented to protect people's health. On an individual level it also serves to help protect the unvaccinated person. Parents who have chosen not to vaccinate their children have signed a Certificate of Exemption for their child which, since 2011, details the responsibilities that go with their choices. *"My child may not be allowed to attend school or child care during an outbreak of the disease that my child has not been fully vaccinated against."* The Certificate of Exemption also states *"Exempting my child from any or all required vaccines may result in serious illness, disability, or death to my child or others. I understand the risks and possible outcomes of my decision to exempt my child."*

Why can't my child come back to school if I am willing to hold the school harmless if my child becomes ill?

- Parents have the right to make personal choices for their children. However, choices made on an individual basis regarding children who attend school have an impact on other families and children. Allowing unvaccinated children to re-enter school while a school is experiencing an outbreak puts more people at risk than the unvaccinated child. If the unvaccinated child becomes sick, he or she can transmit the disease to others in the school before being diagnosed or even before symptoms are recognized (mumps is contagious for 3 days prior to onset of symptoms). The likelihood of an unvaccinated child becoming infected with mumps from an exposure is 5 times higher than for a child who is fully vaccinated.

What should I know about vaccine shedding?

- There is no evidence that someone who has been recently vaccinated with MMR vaccine could give mumps to another person by shedding. A tool in mumps outbreak investigation is genotyping of the virus, which is a genetic fingerprint of the virus. This allows for confirming transmission and for identifying country of origin of the virus. The vaccine strain is genotype A while the recent outbreaks in the U.S., including the Washington outbreak, are genotype G. MMR vaccine protects against this circulating virus and does not cause illness.