



TBR Statement on Vaccination June 2019

In recent months, there have been outbreaks of measles resulting, in part, from people refusing to vaccinate their children.

The Shulhan Arukh (Hoshen Mishpat 427:8), a classic code of Jewish law, teaches, "Wherever there is a potentially life-endangering pitfall or obstacle, it is a positive commandment to remove it... as the Torah says: 'Guard yourself and guard your soul.'" (Deut. 4:9).

Modern science has given us the knowledge and ability to safeguard ourselves from fatal diseases. Jewish tradition obligates us to take these precautions.

Further in Deuteronomy (4:15) we are taught, "Be very careful about your lives." Every life is precious and valuable. We must guard the lives of others, just as we guard our own.

As well, Jews are obligated to care for the health and welfare of others, as it is written, "Love your neighbour as yourself," (Lev. 19:18) and "All Israel is responsible for one another," (Babylonian Talmud, Shevuot 39a).

Some people cannot be vaccinated due to their age, serious health concerns, and certain medical conditions; thus, they rely on "herd immunity" for their safety. Disregarding their safety and exposing them to danger – even potential danger – is against the values of Judaism. Vaccinations are proven to be safe and effective. Claims to the contrary are junk science.

Judaism believes in responsibility and obligation. As we are responsible for each other's safety, we are obligated to take the necessary precautions to ensure everyone's health and well-being.

Joining the vast majority of rabbis from across the denominational spectrum who emphatically and overwhelmingly support vaccination, we, the Toronto Board of Rabbis, implore all those who are able to be vaccinated to do so according to medical guidelines and thereby safeguard the public's health as well as their own.

Further, we call on all Toronto area Jewish organizations, especially schools and summer camps, to require vaccination according to medical guidelines for anyone involved in their organization.

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