

MEASLES AMNESIA

How One Virus Erases Years of Immune Protection

- After measles infection, children lose 33-40% of their protective antibodies against other diseases
- This immunity loss is comparable to the damage caused by 5-10 years of untreated HIV infection
- Rebuilding immune memory takes 2-3 years, leaving children vulnerable to other infections
- Healthy controls without measles retained about 90% of their antibody repertoire

This study provides strong evidence that measles isn't simply a temporary illness, but causes prolonged immune system damage. It effectively "resets" much of the immune system's learned protection against other pathogens, requiring children to re-encounter numerous diseases to rebuild immunity. This finding reinforces the importance of measles vaccination not just for preventing measles itself, but for preserving overall immune protection.

Source: Mina MJ, et al. "Measles virus infection diminishes preexisting antibodies that offer protection from other pathogens." *Science*. 2019;366(6465):599-606.

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