



Weekly Checkup

Vaccines Save Money: Lessons From Texas

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This week, Texas officially [declared](#) the end of its 2025 measles outbreak after recording 762 cases, 99 hospitalizations, and two deaths. Since measles is an avoidable, vaccine-preventable disease, **it seems wise to build on previous [analysis](#) I have done and estimate how much this outbreak cost - and how much less it would have cost if appropriate vaccination had occurred.**

There are three buckets of costs that are incurred by a disease outbreak. There is the direct medical cost of getting measles (patient bills and insurer payments), the indirect costs associated with a measles case (lost productivity from illness, quarantine, and caregiving), and finally the cost of health departments responding to a case (contact tracing, clinics, and surge staffing).

To approximate the direct medical costs, I used values cited in the most recent complete U.S. measles cost study, [Societal Costs of a Measles Outbreak](#). In the study, originally published in *Pediatrics*, the authors reported reimbursements of \$4,032-\$46,060 per hospitalization and \$88-\$526 per outpatient visit. For a cautious estimate, I applied the midpoints of those ranges to Texas' cases (99 hospitalizations and 663 non-hospitalized) and then indexed that to 2025 dollars with the [Medical Care CPI](#). Result: \$3.2 million.

The same [analysis](#) estimates \$14,297 per case in productivity losses in 2019 dollars (this includes time lost from sick patients, quarantined contacts, and caregivers). **Updating that amount with the [Employment Cost Index \(ECI\)](#) through Q2 2025 yields \$18,005 per case. That number is then multiplied by the 762 cases Texas documented. Result: \$13.7 million.**

Public health responses are somewhat difficult to quantify. Across 2004-2017 U.S. outbreaks, the median public health agency response cost was \$18,787 per case. **Scaling**

that to 2025 with the ECI gives \$24,320 per case. Again, we multiply that by the 762 documented cases. Result: \$18.5 million.

So, putting it together:

- **Direct medical care: \$3.2 million**
- **Indirect societal losses: \$13.7 million**
- **Public health response: \$18.5 million**

All told, that’s a cool \$35.4 million. To be clear, these are not audited totals. Still, the data provide a solid basis for estimation, policy planning, and after-action analysis.

Was all this cost avoidable? Some may say “no” - this is simply the cost of doing business. But what if the people exposed to measles that they then contracted had been vaccinated? We know that vaccination can generate [enormous](#) return on investment. **Let’s quickly estimate the cost of vaccinating all the individuals who contracted measles.**

We don’t exactly know what the insurance status is of every person who contracted measles, but we can generally put them into two buckets: the private insurance market or a public insurance market (Medicaid, uninsured, etc.). Regardless, the MMR vaccine - which inoculates against measles - is very accessible to anyone, either through a standard insurance plan or the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The VFC program ensures that the MMR vaccine is accessible to any child, regardless of insured status. **The table below shows the relevant costs of the vaccine and the administration of the shots.**

Vaccination Program	Cost of Vaccine	Dose 1 Administration	Dose 2 Administration	Total	Case Count	Total
Private Market (est.)	\$95.20	\$25.80	\$25.80	\$146.80	762	\$111,861.60
VFC (Texas)	\$26.34	\$13.25	\$13.25	\$52.84	762	\$ 40,264.08

Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Am J Prev Med.](#)

Keep in mind, the table above shows the *total* cost of vaccination. Not per shot. Not per case. **For anywhere between \$40,000-\$115,000, potentially tens of millions of dollars spent on responding to the measles outbreak could have been saved.**

Examples like the Texas measles outbreak continually prove the value of vaccination. Diseases such as measles can result in chronic health issues and disabilities, which [may](#)

significantly reduce lifetime productivity. **Safe, effective vaccines - including the MMR vaccine - can prevent serious illness and death and generate high return on investment through avoided health care expenditures, productivity losses, and response costs. Encouraging vaccination must continue to be a priority for the United States.**