



How To: Letter to the Editor

Getting your Letter to the Editor published in your local paper can be a brave and deeply moving way to share your choice to vaccinate.

Writing Your Letter

- *What to Write About:* Your letter will need to be short, personal, and to the point to get past the editor at your local paper. It can be a positive letter thanking them for covering the story about vaccines or it can be oppositional, pointing out some different data. Read other Letters to the Editor in your local newspaper to get an understanding of the format and tone for your paper.
- *Make it Timely:* It should also be timely, which means it is in direct response to a story they covered that week. This could be a new vaccine requirement, a disease outbreak, or response to new vaccine data.
- *Length:* Most Letters to the Editor need to be very short 150 – 400 words max. Check with your local paper to find out about their rules.
- *Fact-based:* Newspapers are about sharing facts so make sure your opinion is based on facts.
- *Include YOU:* Make the letter about how the news story impacted you as a citizen of the Immunity Community.
- *Sign it:* Make sure to sign your letter with your name, city, and email address.

Submission Tips

You've penned the perfect letter. Now let's get it printed! Find the Letters to the Editor section and contact information for your local paper. This might be easier to find in the print edition than online. Online contact information for the Letters to the Editor section is usually buried at the very bottom of the website in the "Contact Us" page.

Make sure you follow their submission requirements. If you go over the word count, or if you don't submit all the information needed, they will never print it, no matter how brilliant your words are.

After you submit, wait 48-hours to see if they publish it, if they don't send them a follow-up email asking them when they are planning on publishing your letter. This step is critical because it solidifies you as a person who is serious about her letter and wants it published. They might ignore you, but most of the time they will respond with a quick yes or no.

Once it's published, send the editor a quick thank you note. Remember, journalists and editors are people too and everyone likes to be thanked!

Send Us Your Successes!

We'd love to read your letters to the editor. Share your successes in the Forum and email us.

www.vaxnorthwest.org



Sample Letter – 228 words

Diseases are Still Lurking

According to the latest article in {insert name of your local newspaper}, Washington is leading the nation in school-age vaccine exemption rates (http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2015215221_vaccines03m.html). As a parent, I have to speak up.

I hear a lot of parents saying “We don't see these diseases anymore. Why should I vaccinate my child?” It's true we don't see many of these diseases, but it doesn't mean they are gone.

Vaccines have done their job! It is because vaccines have worked successfully that we have seen a decrease in these diseases in the U.S. When vaccination rates decrease, diseases can become more common in our communities. We have already seen a major measles and whooping cough (pertussis) outbreaks in the U.S. in 2010 and 2011. Our community's immunity is eroding.

By vaccinating the most people, we can protect our entire community from diseases. If enough people choose not to vaccinate, it leaves an opening for disease to break through and spread. It's important for everyone to take part in protecting all members of our community.

I'm so thankful that my son is healthy. He's so cute when he plays with friends. I'm glad I chose vaccination so that I can feel better about letting him play with other kids.

I believe that vaccines are the best choice for my family and my community. I hope that other parents will join me in this choice to vaccinate.

Short bio all about you – the parent and vaccine advocate.

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