Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

1. Make it relevant: Respond to a specific story, article, or timely topic.
2. Make it personal: Include your story or someone else’s that relates to the topic.
3. Localize it: Explain why your fellow residents should care or find it important. Include statistics.
4. Keep it short: 150 words or less.

**Talking Points on Vaccinations**

1. Vaccines are important, safe, and effective.
2. Vaccinations are needed across the lifespan. Eleven vaccinations are recommended from birth through age 6, and at least four more are needed in adolescence. Adults may need as many as 10 vaccinations. Patients should check with their doctor to see which vaccinations they need.
3. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says every dollar spent on a childhood vaccination saves $6.30 in direct medical costs. Adding in the costs of lost work time, disability, and death brings the return to $18.40 on every dollar spent.
4. The CDC ranked new vaccines and their ability to prevent disease among the top public health achievements during the first decade of the 21st century.
5. Properly vaccinating all children born in the United States would prevent more than 14 million cases of disease during their lifetime and 33,500 deaths.
6. No scientific evidence or study proves a direct link between vaccines and autism or any other behavior disorder.
7. Flu vaccination is recommended annually for anyone aged 6 months and up.
8. Texas law requires students entering college to get a meningococcal vaccine, which prevents several types of meningitis and blood infections.
9. The best way to keep up with your vaccinations is through a vaccination registry. In Texas, that is ImmTrac, and it is available for anyone. [www.immtrac.com](http://www.immtrac.com)

**Key Educational Times**

1. National Infant Immunization Week in April
2. National Immunization Awareness Month in August
3. National Influenza Vaccination Week in late fall/early winter

**Sample Letter to the Editor**

When was the last time you heard of someone having chickenpox? It’s probably been awhile. Why is that? Because vaccines are doing their job.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says chickenpox cases fell nationally by 80 percent from 2000 to 2010. Texas has required chickenpox, or varicella, vaccination for school since 1999. And our chickenpox rates went from 26,688 cases in 1997 to 2,558 cases in 2011.

Some of us remember lining up to get a polio or rubella vaccination. Thankfully, we can’t remember much about those now long-gone diseases. But whooping cough still cuts babies’ lives short, and outbreaks of measles or meningitis cause lasting health problems, even death.

August is National Immunization Awareness Month, a perfect time to make sure your and your family’s vaccinations are up to date. Check with your doctor to find out which vaccinations you need.

Your name, city

(If you’re sponsoring a vaccination clinic locally, you can provide details.)