

Tetanus infection offers ‘gut-wrenching’ warning about dangers of not vaccinating children

A 6-year-old boy from Oregon who had never received a single vaccine got a cut on his forehead while playing on his family’s farm in 2017. The wound was cleaned and sutured at home.

Six days later, doctors were treating the child for tetanus, an enormously painful, sometimes fatal infection that is caused by bacterial spores found in the soil and that is completely preventable with vaccine. It was the state’s first pediatric tetanus case in more than 30 years.

The boy did survive. But after a weeks-long, gut-wrenching medical marathon — which cost well over \$800,000 — his parents refused to allow the hospital to give him a full course of vaccines to protect him against tetanus. Nor would they allow doctors to vaccinate their son against measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, polio, and a range of other diseases that are dangerous for and can be lethal to young children.

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“He was really sick and it was really difficult to watch,” said [pediatric infectious disease specialist Judith] Guzman-Cottrill. “He was suffering.”

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The cautionary tale of the consequences of not vaccinating children comes at a time when several states are in the grips of [measles](#) outbreaks among unvaccinated children.

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