



**BAD MEDICINE:
RFK JR.'S DIRTY DOZEN ANTIVAX ATTACKS**



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Since his confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) on February 13th, 2025, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (RFK Jr.) has undermined Americans' confidence and threatened access to vaccines, creating extraordinary public health risks for the nation. By breaking promises, distorting facts, and pushing out mainstream vaccine experts and disregarding their views while installing anti-vaccination zealots, RFK Jr. has jeopardized the health of millions.

Public health experts have raised nearly unanimous concerns about the risks if RFK Jr.'s attacks on vaccines continue. Dr. Sean O'Leary, chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics' infectious disease committee, alerted the public that "this is an unmitigated public health disaster."¹ Dr. Tina Tan, president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, indicated that RFK Jr.'s actions "will have a significant negative impact on Americans of all ages."² And Dr. Paul Offit, a member of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Vaccine Advisory Committee, starkly warned that "[i]t is a dangerous time for America's children."³

RFK Jr. has used his position to push his anti-vaccine agenda. He has taken steps that could result in limiting vaccine access and funding for vaccine development, eroding public confidence in vaccines. This "dirty dozen" list describes 12 actions taken under RFK Jr.'s watch that have undermined vaccines, jeopardizing the health of millions of Americans.

This week, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) will meet for the first time since RFK Jr. was confirmed as HHS Secretary. This panel, which appears to consist of members hand-picked by RFK Jr. in order to advance his anti-vaccine agenda, could act to further undermine vaccine access. Americans should watch carefully to ensure that RFK Jr. and his hand-picked committee do not further undermine public health.

The "dirty dozen" list of anti-vaccine activities that occurred under RFK Jr.'s watch includes:

1. "Bur[ying]" a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that "emphasized the importance of vaccinating people against the highly contagious and potentially deadly disease," measles.⁴ The report, originally set to be released amidst a growing measles outbreak, found that the risk of contracting measles was high in communities near outbreaks with low vaccination rates.⁵
2. Promoting pseudoscience remedies and falsehoods while downplaying threats from measles as an outbreak swept across the country. Kennedy falsely claimed that the measles vaccine had not been "safely tested" and that its protection was short-lived.⁶ Kennedy pushed false information on X that "cod liver oil" and "Vitamin A" would be an effective treatment.⁷ As a result, some unvaccinated children who "were given so much Vitamin A...had signs of liver damage."⁸ After the first death from the disease, he claimed that the outbreak was "not unusual" and failed to mention vaccination as a key to stopping the outbreak.⁹
3. Ending the "Let's Get Real" vaccine campaign, which provided resources and information to health care providers for communicating and working with hesitant parents.¹⁰

4. Removing the COVID vaccine from the CDC's recommended immunization schedule for healthy children and pregnant women, without consulting CDC experts.¹¹
5. Commissioning and publishing the "Make America Healthy Again" (MAHA) report, advancing scientifically dubious assertions, filled with distorted research and inaccurate claims about vaccine safety. The MAHA report misleadingly claimed that vaccines are responsible for "many possible adverse events for which there is inadequate evidence to accept or reject a causal relationship."¹² The MAHA report also cited multiple studies that did not exist, and researchers whose papers were cited indicated that the report had misinterpreted their findings.¹³
6. Canceling a promising study to develop a Bird Flu vaccine, even as the newest strain of the disease spreads, infecting more than 70 people, and public health officials become increasingly concerned about a broader outbreak.¹⁴
7. Ending funding for a broad swath of HIV vaccine studies, potentially setting back US-led efforts to end the global AIDS pandemic by a decade.¹⁵
8. Reneging on his promise to "work within the current vaccine approval and safety monitoring systems [and] maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices without changes," on February 20th, Kennedy canceled ACIP's first public meeting of 2025, before firing all the members of the panel on June 9th.¹⁶ ACIP is an independent panel of experts that makes recommendations to the CDC on vaccines. Kennedy also removed the staffers who oversaw ACIP and were responsible for vetting nominees for ACIP membership, effectively leaving the CDC's chief of staff, a Trump Administration political appointee, in charge of the committee's planning.¹⁷
9. Breaking his pledge not to appoint ideological anti-vaxxers to ACIP, Kennedy named eight new members to the panel, of which at least half are vaccine skeptics.¹⁸ According to various CDC officials, Kennedy circumvented the CDC's process to select his new committee members.¹⁹
10. Announcing in his first address to agency staff as HHS secretary, Kennedy said he would use the Make America Healthy Again commission to investigate the childhood vaccination schedule, despite his baseless claims that it contributes to poor health outcomes.²⁰
11. Hiring David Geier, a known vaccine skeptic who has promoted the debunked link between immunizations and autism, to study the theory.²¹ More than a decade ago, state regulators disciplined Geier for practicing medicine without a license.²²
12. Forcing Dr. Peter Marks, the FDA's top vaccine official and head of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, to step down²³ after Dr. Marks refused to comply with Secretary Kennedy's wish for "subservient confirmation of his misinformation and lies."²⁴

During his tenure as the HHS Secretary, RFK Jr. has systematically weakened the nation's vaccine system, stoking parents' fears and using his position to push his anti-vaccine agenda and limit access to vaccines. Between 1994 and 2023, childhood vaccines prevented 1.13 million deaths, 32 million hospitalizations, and 508 million lifetime diseases.²⁵ They also saved \$540 billion in direct costs and \$2.7 trillion in savings to society.²⁶ Vaccines are vital to protecting the lives of millions, and if Secretary Kennedy is successful in dismantling the nation's vaccine system, the nation will face an extraordinary public health crisis.

Endnotes

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