

What Florida's Data Shows: When Vaccine Rates Dip, Whooping Cough Surges



Whooping cough is resurging in Florida. It spreads easily when vaccination falls below 93% and can cause weeks of severe coughing, disrupt daily life, and even threaten babies with serious complications. Florida saw a drop in kindergarten coverage in 2023–24, followed by a surge in cases.

Health Watch

Whooping cough outbreaks surge, fueled by waning immunity and falling vaccination rates

By Dr. Céline Gounder

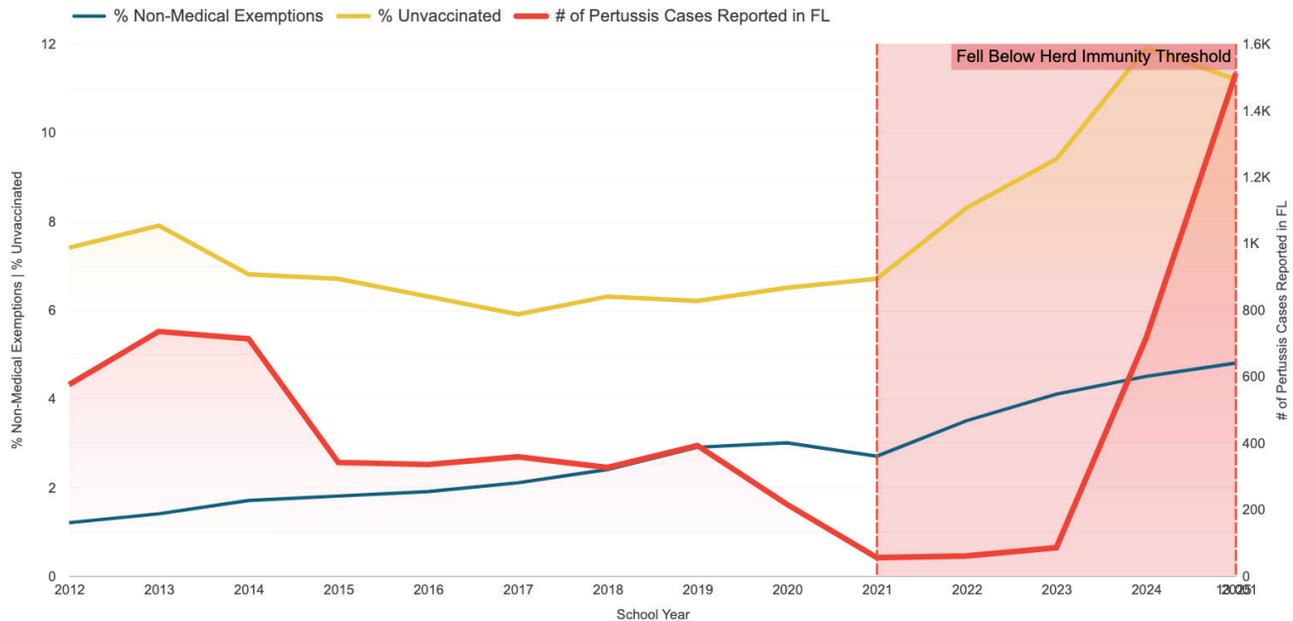


What the Data Shows: A small drop in protection can create a big opening for disease.

- In the 2023–24 school year, Florida's kindergarten pertussis **vaccination coverage fell by 2.5%**.
- At the same time, Florida's **non-medical exemption rate continued to climb**, reaching nearly 5% of kindergarteners in 2025.
- Following these declines, **reported whooping cough cases jumped by 741% in 2024**, the largest increase in more than a decade.

Why it Matters: Herd immunity isn't a suggestion, it's a threshold. When vaccination rates fall below that line, outbreaks become more likely, especially in schools and communities where exemptions are concentrated.

Pertussis Trends of Kindergarteners in Florida



Data Sources: CDC'S SchoolVaxView, Florida Department of Health Reportable Diseases Frequency Report

Florida's data is clear: lower vaccination rates and higher exemptions lead to more preventable disease. Strong vaccine standards keep kids healthy, classrooms open, and illness down statewide.

