

# The Health Significance of Families Seen through the Recent Measles Outbreak

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The recent rise of measles demonstrates the importance of our families' social characteristics for a host of infectious and non-infectious diseases. We need to recognize that families are more than their shared genes; families are distinctive health environments and our family relationships affect our health and health behaviors. Although families are a relatively understudied health context, I recommend several avenues by which we can grow this exciting field within social epidemiology. With a greater understanding of how families' social characteristics influence health, we can inform clinical and public health practices and better meet our public health goals.

least) two people to get married and birth or adopt children and couples coordinate their employment decisions [13]. Individual action creates and reinforces the family, but once created, families are more than the sum of their parts [14] and become important health contexts unto their own.

Two are two broad dimensions of family life that matter for individual health – the family's interpersonal processes and their structural traits. I next describe each dimension and demonstrate their importance for children's risks for contracting measles.

### Family interpersonal processes

One of the content and patterning of their communication and behavior, family members can influence each other's health. This dimension comprises families' dynamic relationships, though it is complex.



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