

## JOSEPH P. ADDABBO FAMILY HEALTH CENTER IN THE NEWS

**This article appeared August 10, 2021 in *Documented*.** By Giulia McDonnell Nieto del Rio@Giuliamcdnr, a reporter for America Corps who covers immigration enforcement for *Documented*.



**Far Rockaway Has the Lowest Vaccination Rate in the City. Here's Why Misinformation and a fear of missing out on work are preventing residents from getting the COVID-19 vaccine in the geographically isolated neighborhood of Far Rockaway, Queens.**

Soleima Santiago held off on getting vaccinated for months after the shots became widely available to New Yorkers. She works two jobs — a morning stint at a hairdresser, and an evening shift at a restaurant — and couldn't find a window to get inoculated.

"I didn't have any time," Santiago, 19, a native of El Salvador, said Saturday at the Joseph P. Addabbo Health Center in Far Rockaway, while she waited to get her first vaccine shot. "I work from 8 a.m. until midnight."

It is a familiar predicament across much of the City. Vaccination rates in some neighborhoods with high foreign-born populations have lagged behind the city average

for various reasons — including tight work schedules, fears of adverse reactions, rampant misinformation fortified by the geographical isolation of some communities like Far Rockaway, and a shortage of inoculation sites.

Despite aggressive efforts to encourage inoculations, vaccination rates in one zip code on the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens still trail well far behind the City's norm.

The Edgemere and Far Rockaway zip code of 11691, has the lowest vaccination rate in the City. Here, only about 34 percent of individuals of all ages are vaccinated, city data shows, compared to more than 55 percent citywide. Vaccination rates in this swath of the Rockaway Peninsula even lag behind the numbers in Alabama, the state with the lowest percentage of fully vaccinated people in the nation (35.02%), according to the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center.

Far Rockaway has become emblematic of the many hurdles hindering vaccination efforts in low-income urban neighborhoods with significant immigrant populations. Roughly one-third of the almost 70,000 residents of zip code 11691 are foreign born, mostly from Latin America, according to U.S. census data. The median household income in zip code 11691, on the eastern side of the Rockaway Peninsula, is about \$50,000 — about \$14,000 less than the average NYC household income.

By contrast, the average household income is almost \$106,000 in Breezy Point, on the peninsula's western flank. There, in zip code 11697, about 79 percent of residents are fully vaccinated, far above the city average.

In recent weeks, community activists, lawmakers and others have made a renewed push to bolster inoculations in the Far Rockaway area. "We're at a pivotal moment in this fight — we don't want to go back to where we were last year," Queens Borough President Donovan Richards said Thursday, during a visit to Far Rockaway with other officials aimed at encouraging residents to get vaccinated. "Reminder — Far Rockaway shut down. Reminder — bodies upon bodies at our hospitals."

Far Rockaway is "this little microcosm of New York City," said Miriam Vega, the Chief Executive Officer of the Joseph P. Addabbo Family Health Center, a major community health hub which has locations in Rockaway, Southeast Queens and Brooklyn. "The issues that New York City faces as a whole, they are extremely punctuated there."

The key to increasing vaccinations, immigrant advocates say, is to quell fears about the shot and boost the availability of appointments and accurate information. Often, this means walking the streets and seeking out residents.

For months, advocacy groups have been aggressively pitching vaccines in immigrant communities. They've translated paperwork into Spanish and other languages, hired bilingual health-care workers and dispatched buses with vaccine teams to every borough, while expanding vaccination periods to weekends and after-work hours. Advocates have

also been posted outside vaccination sites, seeking to allay fears and reminding people that neither lack of health insurance or uncertain immigration status hinders eligibility.

“Continuing to keep trusted messengers at the forefront of the outreach is essential,” said Ellie Alter, the COVID-19 outreach coordinator for Make the Road New York, an advocacy organization that has been setting up clinics to help immigrants and others get vaccinated throughout the city. “And to take a more sort of deep-canvassing approach where we understand that these are ongoing conversations that require multiple touches.”

Still, in the 11691 zip code, a community where about 22 percent of residents speak Spanish at home, there aren’t enough materials in Spanish — and existing Spanish-language pamphlets and brochures are often written without cultural context that fails to ease people’s concerns, Dr. Vega from Addabbo said. Some residents interviewed agreed that this contributed to the hesitancy about the vaccine.

“There is a little bit of information in Spanish, but there isn’t enough,” said Aldo Esteban, a 19-year-old Guatemalan restaurant worker who was getting his first shot at Addabbo on Saturday. “People sometimes can’t do the homework of really investigating.”



*Aldo Esteban, 19, waited in line to get his first shot on Saturday. Esteban, who is from Guatemala, is the first in his family to get vaccinated, and he hoped his move would encourage others to get the shot, too. Photo: Giulia McDonnell Nieto del Rio for Documented*

In the Far Rockaway zip code of 11691, 25 percent of residents are Hispanic and 47 percent are Black. Across New York City, 43 percent of Hispanic residents are fully vaccinated, and 32 percent of Black residents are fully vaccinated. There is no available city data that breaks down the percentage of vaccinated residents by demographics in zip codes.

Some individuals, especially those who are undocumented, are wary of filling out forms asking personal questions that they don’t fully understand. Many immigrants, like Santiago, who juggles beauty parlor and restaurant gigs, say they can’t miss work for the shot. Others worry that reactions to the jab could leave them bed-ridden or even

hospitalized, potentially exposing them to a lack of income and to medical bills prohibitive for those lacking insurance.

“We have to understand that, in the context of this community, where folks are often living paycheck to paycheck, being super sick is not just a matter of what that’s going to feel like — but fear of not being able to work for a week and not having the job security,” said Alter from Make the Road New York.

Floridalma Linares, from El Salvador, stood in line on Saturday at the Addabbo center with her 15-year-old son, who she was accompanying to get the shot. Linares, 40, had not yet been vaccinated and wasn’t planning to for at least several more months. She contracted COVID-19 in March of 2020, and feared that the vaccine could bring back the debilitating symptoms that she suffered last year. “I don’t want to feel that way again,” she said.

Considerable misinformation about the vaccine has been circulating in Far Rockaway, a relatively insular community where many people both live and work in the surrounding area, and where there are relatively few reliable health-care providers. Hyperbolized accounts about incapacitating side-effects spread quickly by word of mouth.



*Esmeralda Guardado, 34, accompanied her 13-year-old daughter to get vaccinated at Addabbo on Saturday. “She didn’t want to,” Guardado said about her daughter getting the shot. Photo: Giulia McDonnell Nieto del Rio for Documented*

“You hear a lot of comments, and you don’t know what reaction you’re going to have to the vaccine,” said Dilia Broncano, from Guatemala, who was at Addabbo on Saturday with a hand on the stroller of her one-year-old daughter. She was there to get her second shot, but was nervous because of discussion circulating in her community about the side effects – and many of her family and friends haven’t gotten vaccinated because of this, she said. “It’s all because of what you hear – you just don’t know what reaction you’re going to have,” Broncano, 26, said.

In Far Rockaway, “the physical geographical isolation leads to isolation of information,” said Dr. Vega, expressing a sense of urgency about stepping up vaccinations. “The longer this goes on, the more entrenched some people get in their positions of being anti-vaccine.”

On Saturday, dozens of individuals lined up on Central Avenue in Far Rockaway outside Addabbo, which is a non-profit health center. Typically, about 300 people are vaccinated there during the weekend clinics. Health professionals chatted with clients, guided them through the paperwork, and encouraged them to bring others to get their shot. Families, many with young kids, chatted in Spanish, Mandarin, and other languages.

Linares, who is six months pregnant, was also fearful of what could happen to her baby if she got the vaccine. “I’ve heard you’re not supposed to get the vaccine if you’re pregnant,” she said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, however, recommends that expecting mothers be vaccinated because they are more likely to get severely ill from COVID-19 compared to others. But the CDC also notes that there is still limited data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for people who are pregnant.

Roberto Linares, the son of Floridalma Linares, said he had decided to come get the shot on Saturday because he wanted to be safe to start school. Roberto, 15, was also hoping to go visit family members back in El Salvador and thought he might need to be vaccinated to travel. “I have to go to school and there are a lot of risks with that,” he said, adding that he was “a little nervous” about the vaccine because he didn’t want to feel sick afterwards.

More people were lining up to get the shot on Saturday than on previous weekends, staffers at Addabbo said. Some speculated that reports of the \$100 incentive recently announced by the City was drawing clients, along with the upcoming start of the school year and fears about the Delta variant.

About 70 percent of the Addabbo staff is from the community, Dr. Vega said, a fact that has helped foster trust.

Some, like Diana Catalan, the clinic director, were born and reared in the neighborhood. People recognize her on the street and ask her about the vaccine. For Catalan, the vaccination mission is close to her heart. Her father, who came to Far Rockaway from Guatemala in the early 1980s, passed away from the virus in February.

“It was horrible,” said Catalan, who channels that personal pain into advice for fellow residents. “If you love your children, you should think about getting vaccinated,” Catalan tells people. “I see what it looks like to be sick, I had to take care of my dad, so I wouldn’t wish that on anybody.”

She views every vaccine administered as a victory. “People tell me: ‘que dios me la bendiga,’” Catalan said, using the Spanish phrase for ‘God bless you.’ “That, to me, feels like they trust me—and that I wouldn’t encourage them to do something that is not the right decision.”

Esteban, the restaurant worker who was getting his first shot on Saturday, said reports of rising numbers of infections had helped motivate him to get the shot. He is the first one in his family to get vaccinated, and he's hoping that his own decision to get the shot will encourage both his loved ones and his co-workers to do the same.

“This is the moment where we can't wait anymore,” Esteban said in Spanish. “I don't want to hurt other people. We have to help...that's the message we have to send.” To see the story in print, [click here](#).

**KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE**

**August 11, 2021**

**WEEKEND VACCINATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Team,

We are almost there. As hard as it is to believe, we are nearly at the end of this program. You all answered the call to serve the community, without knowing exactly what would be in store for you. The road to here wasn't exactly perfect, but we figured it

out together. With each weekend you became more confident and made the patients feel like they were in good hands. What you have accomplished is truly amazing and I never get tired of telling you how proud I am of you. I am looking forward to celebrating your work next Saturday.

On Saturday, August 7<sup>th</sup> we gave (43) vaccinations at site 1 and (122) at site 2. On Sunday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, we administered (56) vaccinations at site 1 and (92) at site 2. That's a total of 313 this weekend. "It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end. Good company in a journey makes the way seem shorter."

Thanks for taking the ride with me. Kaye Glover, Project Manager

***"EXPECT A FLOOD OF  
COVID-19 VACCINE  
MANDATES AFTER  
FULL FDA  
APPROVAL"***



As soon as the Food and Drug Administration issues a full approval for a COVID-19 vaccine, there will be "a flood" of vaccine mandates at businesses and schools across the nation, Dr. Anthony Fauci told USA TODAY's Editorial Board on Friday.

Mandates aren't going to happen at the federal level, but vaccine approval will embolden many groups, he predicted. "Organizations, enterprises, universities, colleges that have been reluctant to mandate at the local level will feel much more confident," he said.

"They can say: 'If you want to come to this college or this university, you've got to get vaccinated. If you want to work in this plant, you have to get vaccinated. If you want to work in this enterprise, you've got to get vaccinated. If you want to work in this hospital, you've got to get vaccinated.'"

Fauci said he doesn't see more lockdowns coming. They were issued early in the pandemic to keep hospitals from being overwhelmed, known as "flattening the curve."

"The rationale for shutting down was that the hospital system would not be able to handle the surge of cases because everybody was getting sick," he said.

With more than 70% of adults having had at least one dose of vaccine, the epidemic has shifted to one of the unvaccinated, he said. "When you walk into a hospital, what you're going to see is a lot of young people, some of whom are seriously ill, but you're not seeing an overwhelming outstripping of the capability of the hospitals throughout the country," he said.

**Lies, mistruths and death.** Though he's attacked online and in conservative media every day, Fauci said, he worries less about himself than for the nation as a whole. "This is a dystopian world we're living in," he said. The public is awash in lies and misinformation about COVID-19 and the vaccines, he said, and "they are being misled."

**Protecting children.** The delta variant has thrown the danger of COVID-19 to young children into sharp relief. In Tennessee, the Department of Health projects the state's children's hospitals are on pace to be full by the end of next week.

The state's health commissioner, Dr. Lisa Piercey, said the delta variant is rapidly spreading among children, who are quickly showing symptoms after possible exposure, possibly amounting to a much faster incubation time than previous versions of the virus. Children under 12 are not yet eligible for the vaccine, so the adults around them must be their protection, Fauci said.

At schools, everyone needs to be vaccinated, he said, teachers, assistants, janitors, "anybody who is anywhere near a child in what should be a protected environment of a school."

Because in today's political environment that won't happen, Fauci said, masks are the next best thing. Schools are crucial for children's mental health and intellectual, physical and social development, so it's important they stay open.

"I would rather have a child be a little bit uncomfortable with a mask on and be healthy than a comfortable child without a mask in an ICU," he said. "It just doesn't make any sense to me why you would want to not protect the children."

**A 'smoldering' future for US.** The epidemic in the United States could end once and for all if everyone would get vaccinated, Fauci said. Barring that, he worries we're in it for the long term. "You will get a smoldering level of infection that will just go right into the fall, get confused with influenza in the winter and then come back again in the spring," he said. The unvaccinated will continue to get sick, and some will die. The young and healthy are statistically not likely to become seriously ill if infected, but they don't live in a vacuum, he said. The more people who are infected, the more chance the virus has to mutate into an even more dangerous variant.

Fauci ended by emphasizing that while the COVID-19 vaccines are not perfect, they do one thing extraordinarily well: keep people who get COVID-19 from becoming severely ill or dying. "The reason to get vaccinated is not so that you can go around without wearing a mask," he said. The reason is "because we don't want you to wind up in the ICU. And I can guarantee you 99% that if you get vaccinated, you are not going to wind up in the ICU." *USA Today* To read more, [click here](#).

## **THIS IS REALLY SCARY: KIDS STRUGGLE WITH LONG COVID**

Lingering physical, mental and neurological symptoms are affecting children as well as adults, including many who had mild reactions to the initial coronavirus infection.

Will Grogan stared blankly at his ninth-grade biology classwork. It was material he had mastered the day before, but it looked utterly unfamiliar. "I don't know what you're talking about," he blurted. His teacher and classmates reminded him how adeptly he'd answered questions about the topic during the previous class. "I've never seen this before," he insisted, becoming so distressed that the teacher excused him to visit the school nurse.

As young people across the country prepare to return to school, many are struggling to recover from lingering post-Covid neurological, physical or psychiatric symptoms. Often called "long Covid," the symptoms and their duration vary, as does the severity.

Studies estimate long Covid may affect between 10 percent and 30 percent of adults infected with the coronavirus. Estimates from the handful of studies of children so far range widely. At an April congressional hearing, Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, cited one study suggesting that between 11 percent and 15 percent of infected youths might "end up with this long-term consequence, which can be pretty devastating in terms of things like school performance."

The challenges facing young patients come as pediatric Covid-19 cases rise sharply, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant and the fact that well under half of 12-to-17-year-olds are fully vaccinated and children under 12 are still ineligible for vaccines.

Doctors say even youths with mild or asymptomatic initial infections may experience long Covid: confounding, sometimes debilitating issues that disrupt their schooling, sleep, extracurricular activities and other aspects of life.

"The potential impact is huge," said Dr. Avindra Nath, chief of infections of the nervous system at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "I mean, they're

in their formative years. Once you start falling behind, it's very hard because the kids lose their own self-confidence too. It's a downward spiral."

Will, an Eagle Scout, a talented tennis player and a highly motivated student who loves studying languages so much that he takes both French and Arabic, said he used to feel "taking naps is a waste of sunlight."

But Covid made him so fatigued that he could barely leave his bed for 35 days, and he was so dizzy that he had to sit to keep from fainting in the shower. When he returned to his Dallas high school classes, brain fog caused him to see "numbers floating off the page" in math, to forget to turn in a history paper on Japanese Samurai he'd written days earlier and to insert fragments of French into an English assignment.

"I handed it to my teacher, and she was like 'Will, is this your scratch notes?'" said Will, adding that he worried: "Am I going to be able to be a good student ever again? Because this is really scary."

**'We don't have any sort of magic treatment'**. Nearly 4.2 million young people in the United States have had Covid-19, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Relatively small percentages have been hospitalized for initial infections or developed a condition called Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) that can emerge several weeks later. Doctors expect considerably more will experience long Covid.

At Boston Children's Hospital, where a program draws long Covid patients from across the country, "we're seeing things like fatigue, headaches, brain fog, memory and concentration difficulties, sleep disturbances, ongoing change in smell and taste," said Dr. Molly Wilson-Murphy, a neuroinfectious diseases specialist there. She said most patients were "kids who had Covid and weren't hospitalized, recovered at home, and then they have symptoms that just never go away — or they seem to get totally better and then a couple of weeks or a month or so after, they develop symptoms." *New York Times* To read the complete story, [click here](#).



**PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS  
URGE LOCAL MASK AND  
VACCINE REQUIREMENTS  
AS SCHOOLS REOPEN  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Public health experts are urging more businesses and local officials to enact mask and vaccine requirements to slow the spread of the coronavirus as the more contagious delta variant drives a fourth surge of covid-19 cases in the United States.

“The time has come,” Anthony S. Fauci, the White House’s chief coronavirus medical adviser, said on NBC’s “Meet the Press” Sunday. “We’ve got to go the extra step to get people vaccinated. You want to persuade them, that’s good ... but for those who do not want, I believe mandates at the local level need to be done.”

The push comes as coronavirus cases in the United States rose 40 percent in the past week, while covid-related hospitalizations rose 36 percent in the same period. In addition, coronavirus cases among children are on the rise — with the school year set to begin in many districts across the country. Meanwhile, children younger than 12 remain ineligible for vaccination.

CDC warns 'the war has changed' as delta variant continues to spread. An internal CDC report warns the delta variant of the covid-19 appears to cause more severe illness than earlier variants and spreads as easily as chickenpox. (Casey Silvestri/The Washington Post)

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said on “Meet the Press” that she supported a vaccine mandate for teachers, in part to help protect children who could not yet be inoculated. She also noted that immunizations — and immunization requirements — have been in schools since the 19th century. “Vaccines are the single-most important way of dealing with covid,” Weingarten said. “As a matter of personal conscience, I think that we need to be working with our employers, not opposing them, on vaccine mandates.”

Weingarten estimated that about 90 percent of the teachers who are members of the union have gotten the vaccine. The union passed a policy in October saying vaccines should be voluntary for teachers, but she said circumstances now merited a mandate. “I do think that the circumstances have changed, and that vaccination is a community responsibility, and it weighs really heavily on me that kids under 12 can’t get vaccinated,” she said, explaining her reversal.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said on “Face the Nation” that he has spoken with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) and to the Florida education commissioner to try to persuade them to take more measures to protect students while keeping schools open.

“We’re clearly at a fork in the road in this country,” Cardona said. “You’re either going to help students be in school in-person and be safe, or the decisions you make will hurt

students. While I understand the argument around not wanting to wear masks because we're fatigued, without question student safety and staff safety come first." *Washington Post*

## **WE HAVE ZERO YEARS LEFT TO AVOID DANGEROUS CLIMATE CHANGE**

Earth is warming faster than previously thought, scientists say, and the window is closing to avoid catastrophic outcomes.

As the world battles historic droughts, landscape-altering wildfires and deadly floods, a landmark report from global scientists says the window is rapidly closing to cut our reliance on fossil fuels and avoid catastrophic changes that would transform life as we know it.

The state-of-the-science report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says the world has rapidly warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius higher than pre-industrial levels, and is now careening toward 1.5 degrees — a critical threshold that world leaders agreed warming should remain below to avoid worsening impacts.

Only by making deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, while also removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, can we halt the precipitous trend.

"Bottom line is that we have zero years left to avoid dangerous climate change, because it's here," Michael E. Mann, a lead author of the IPCC's 2001 report, told CNN.

Unlike previous assessments, Monday's report concludes it is "unequivocal" that humans have caused the climate crisis and confirms that "widespread and rapid changes" have already occurred, some of them irreversibly.

Scientists can now say yes, that wild weather was caused by climate change. That is due in part to the breakneck pace at which the planet has been recently warming, faster than scientists have previously observed. Since 2018, when the panel published a special report on the significance of 1.5-degrees, greenhouse gas emissions have continued mostly unabated and have pushed global temperatures higher.

Even under the IPCC's most optimistic scenario, in which the world's emissions begin to drop sharply today and are reduced to net zero by 2050, global temperature will still peak above the 1.5-degree threshold before falling.

In a statement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called the report "a code red for humanity," and noted the 1.5-degree threshold is "perilously close."

"The only way to prevent exceeding this threshold is by urgently stepping up our efforts, and pursuing the most ambitious path," Guterres said.

The IPCC report comes just three months before the UN-led international climate change talks, during which global leaders are expected to strengthen their commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Key takeaways from the UN report on the climate crisis: Though some countries have pledged stricter cuts since the 2015 Paris Agreement, many have missed deadlines to do so, and there is still a significant gap between what leaders are promising and what's needed by 2030.

"From a scientific perspective, every degree, every part of a degree, every half of a degree matters in terms of limiting the impacts that we will see from climate change," Ko Barrett, the former vice chair of the IPCC, told CNN. "So at whatever level countries decide is what they're aiming for, there are benefits and there are consequences to choosing those limits."

Dave Reay, the director of the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute, said world leaders "must have the findings of this report seared into their minds" at the November conference and take urgent action. "This is not just another scientific report," Reay said. "This is hell and highwater writ large."

Yet Monday's report uses the strongest wording to date in describing the climate crisis. Ice sheets are melting and will continue to melt; extreme flooding from higher sea level will continue to get more frequent; and sea level itself will continue to rise well into the 22nd century, simply because of the amount of heat the oceans have already trapped.

At the same time scientists are sounding the alarm, the International Energy Agency says human carbon emissions "are on course to surge by 1.5 billion tons in 2021 — the second-largest increase in history — reversing most of last year's decline caused by the Covid-19 pandemic."

The IPCC report is clear that global leaders must cut greenhouse gas emissions now, before deadly and costly weather extremes get even worse. But Barrett said a key message in the report is that it's still possible to prevent the most dire impacts.

"It really requires unprecedented transformational change, rapid and immediate reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050," said Barrett. "The idea that there is still a pathway forward is a point that should give us some hope." *CNN.com*

**THERE IS A RIGHT  
AND WRONG WAY  
TO TICKLE A RAT**



It's generally not a good time to be a rodent in Australia. On farms across the country, mice are being poisoned and chased out of fields by desperate farmers as the country suffers one of the worst mouse plagues in living memory.

But at one lab in Canberra, the nation's capital, a select group of lab rats has had quite a different experience. Researchers have tickled them every day for a month to see if it will improve their emotional well-being, and perhaps make them better models for research.

"It is widely accepted that happy animals lead to improved research outcomes and ultimately better patient care, so we are always looking for new techniques, equipment and skills that will improve," according to a poster about the project from the Center for Health and Medical Research in Canberra.

It adds, "Rat tickling is a technique used by animal technicians to mimic the play-fighting behavior that juvenile rats engage in. By participating in this behavior with our rats, we aim to lessen the impact of handling and increase positive associations with human interaction."

The Australian Capital Territory (Canberra is its largest city) in 2019 became the first jurisdiction in the country to recognize animals as sentient beings, and imposed penalties for their mistreatment. So, just how do you tickle a rat?

It's more of a science than an art, according to Carlee Mottley, a laboratory animal technician at the University of Wollongong and a certified rat tickler (no, really, there's an online course for that.)

"There is a right and wrong way to tickle a rat," said Ms. Mottley, who was not involved in the experiment at the center in Canberra. "If you do it the wrong way, it can be non-beneficial. At best, they could not know what you're doing, and, at worst, it could hurt them."

According to the center's researchers, there are three proper ways to tickle a rat.

**Dorsal contact:** Touch the back of the rat's neck with quick, light movements. Avoid the tail and haunches, as these areas are where aggression from other rats is directed.

**Flipping:** Gently restrain the rat around its front legs and lift it while rotating your wrist to flip the rat onto its back. This movement is “the most difficult part of rat tickling but the most beneficial,” the center said, since it closely mimics what happens when rats wrestle.

**Pinning:** Tickle the rat between its front legs and on its chest while applying a firm, constant pressure to keep the rat on its back.

*And what’s it like tickling a rat?* “It’s fun,” Ms. Mottley said. “The last step is you flip them and let them go, and they’ll turn around and come straight back,” she said. “You put out your arm to tickle them again and they’ll try and climb up your arm because they want more.”

As tempting as all this may make you wish to dash out and tickle rats indiscriminately, Paul McGreevy, a professor of animal behavior and welfare at the University of New England, has a warning. “It’s a mistake to assume all rats are into tickling, and a mistake to assume that all humans are equally good at tickling rats,” he said.

Just like humans, he added, different rodents have individual preferences for how they like to be tickled. “Some of them will totally be into being handled, some of them will find tickling pleasing if done well, and others will want to avoid any physical pressure imposed upon themselves,” he said.

“If there was a way for every rat to get the dose of tickling they want, that would be ideal.”  
New York Times To read entire story, [click here](#).

## STAY SAFE – BE WELL

