

# Polio - What You Need to Know

## What is Polio?

- Polio is a very infectious virus that affects the brain and spinal cord. It can cause paralysis and death.
- The virus enters the body through the mouth and lives in the intestines and throat.
- There is no cure for polio.

## How common is polio?

Polio was declared eliminated from the U.S. in 1979, but it is still endemic (common) in parts of the world like Afghanistan and Pakistan. There have also been recent outbreaks in African countries, the Americas, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Eastern Mediterranean.

## How does polio spread?

Polio is very contagious. It is spread through contact with the stool (poop) of an infected person and also through contact with an infected person's oral or nasal fluid.

## What are the symptoms of polio?

- Most people who become infected with polio won't feel sick or show visible symptoms, but they can still spread the disease to others.
- Some people will have flu-like symptoms like sore throat, fever, tiredness, nausea, headache, and stomach pain. These symptoms last 2 - 5 days and go away on their own.
- In rare cases, polio can affect the brain and spinal cord and cause:
  - Meningitis, which is an infection in the membranes that cover the spinal cord.
  - Paralysis or weakness in the arms and/or legs. Paralysis from polio can lead to permanent disability or death due to the virus affecting muscles that aid in breathing.

## What are possible complications from polio infection?

Those who survive polio may develop post-polio syndrome (PPS), which can occur decades after their initial recovery. PPS is not contagious, but it can cause muscle weakness, joint pain, and fatigue.



**Flip over to read polio prevention and the importance of vaccination.**



## How can we prevent the spread of polio?

In the 20th century, polio was one of the most feared childhood diseases. In 1952, there were nearly 60,000 cases and more than 3,000 deaths in the U.S. **The best way to prevent the spread of polio is through vaccination.** With large numbers of people in communities vaccinated, the disease is unable to spread. In fact, vaccination has reduced the number of cases by 99%. It's also important to note that since polio is still common in other parts of the world, international travel can bring polio to our communities. If we stop vaccinating, we open the door for it to again become a common disease in the U.S.

In addition to vaccination, it is important to practice other disease-prevention measures such as frequent handwashing with soap and water.\* This is especially important:

- Before meals or helping to feed others.
- After using the restroom, helping someone else use the restroom, or changing diapers.

*\*Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill poliovirus.*

## Who should be vaccinated against polio?

**Four total doses of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) are recommended** for young children, one dose at each of the following ages: 2 months, 4 months, 6-18 months, and 4-6 years. Anyone who is not fully vaccinated is at risk. Older children and adults who are unsure of their vaccination history or know they were not vaccinated against polio should also be fully vaccinated.

### Questions about polio vaccines?

**Talk to your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or community health center.**

**Find a free or low-cost vaccine provider near you:  
[bitl.ly/FindCOVaxProvider](https://bit.ly/FindCOVaxProvider)**

**#KeepCOHealthy**

### Sources

<https://www.cdc.gov/polio/about/index.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/polio/factsheet/index.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7319a4.htm>

[www.ImmunizeColorado.org](http://www.ImmunizeColorado.org) | [www.ImmunizeforGood.com](http://www.ImmunizeforGood.com)

