

Polio Fact Sheet

What is Polio?

- Polio is an infectious viral disease which may affect the brain and spinal cord causing muscle weakness and paralysis. It is most often spread through person to person contact through oral/nasal secretions and stool.
- Patients are most infectious 7-10 days before and after the onset of symptoms.
- The incubation period is commonly 6 – 20 days with a range up to 35 days.

History: A 1916 polio epidemic in the United States killed 6,000 people and paralyzed 27,000 more. In the early 1950's there were more than 25,000 cases of polio reported each year. Polio vaccination was begun in 1955. By 1960 the number of reported cases had dropped to about 3,000, and by 1979 there were only about 10.

Currently: On May 5, 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the international spread of wild poliovirus (WPV) to be a public health emergency of international concern. On June 2, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a health alert providing guidance for polio vaccination requirements for those residents from the infected countries and those traveling to the polio-infected countries.

Symptoms:

Approximately 72% of persons infected with polio will have no symptoms. About 24% of infected persons have minor symptoms, such as fever, fatigue, nausea, headache, flu-like symptoms, stiffness in the neck and back, and pain in the limbs, which often resolve completely. Fewer than 1% of polio cases result in permanent paralysis of the limbs (usually the legs). Of those paralyzed, 5-10% die when the paralysis strikes the respiratory muscles. The death rate increases with increasing age.

Treatment:

There is presently no cure for polio. Treatment involves supportive care.

Why get vaccinated?

Because polio has no cure, vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and the only way to stop the disease from spreading. Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that invades the nervous system. Once a complete series of polio vaccine is administered, one is considered to have lifelong immunity to poliomyelitis.

Polio-Infected Countries

The following countries are currently considered polio-infected and have temporary vaccination requirements. Afghanistan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria.

You must be vaccinated or show proof of vaccination if:

- You are from one of the countries listed above
- You have or will be traveling to an area of the world where polio is common

For more information:

- <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/news-announcements/polio-guidance-new-requirements>