



# Frequently Asked Questions

## POLIO (Poliomyelitis)

### **What is polio?**

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus, called poliovirus, that invades the nervous system and can cause muscle weakness and paralysis.

### **How is polio spread?**

Polio spreads when the stool of an infected person is introduced into the mouth of another person through contaminated food or water (fecal-oral transmission). Oral-oral transmission is also possible by way of an infected person's saliva.

### **Who can get polio?**

After the introduction of the polio vaccine in 1955, the number of cases of polio in the United States decreased dramatically. The last naturally occurring case in the U.S. was in 1979. Travelers to countries where polio cases still occur should know if they are immune or be fully immunized.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Most people who get infected with poliovirus (about 72 out of 100) will not have any visible symptoms. About one out of four people with poliovirus infection will have flu-like symptoms that may include: sore throat, fever, tiredness, nausea, headache, stomach pain. These symptoms usually last two to five days, then go away on their own. A smaller proportion of people (much less than one out of 100, or one to five out of 1,000) with poliovirus infection will develop other, more serious symptoms that affect the spinal cord and brain including: paresthesia, meningitis, paralysis.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

The incubation period is commonly seven to 14 days with a range of three to 35 days.

### **How is polio treated?**

There is no specific treatment or cure for polio other than supportive care.

### **Is there a vaccine to prevent polio?**

Polio is a vaccine-preventable disease. Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), given as an injection, should be given at 2, 4, and 6 to 18 months of age, and again at 4 to 6 years. IPV replaced the oral polio vaccine (OPV) that was used before 2000.

### **Resources**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/polio/what-is-polio/>

**Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology  
24/7 Emergency Contact Number: 1-888-295-5156**

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