

# Polio Key Facts



**Polio (or poliomyelitis) is a disabling and life-threatening disease caused by the poliovirus.**

**Poliovirus is very contagious and spreads through person-to-person contact.**

**Polio is a vaccine preventable disease!**



## Symptoms

- Most people with polio will not have any symptoms. About 25% will have flu-like symptoms that may include:
  - Sore throat
  - Fever
  - Tiredness
  - Nausea
  - Headache
  - Stomach pain
- Although rare, in its most serious form polio can lead to permanent paralysis (cannot move your body) or muscle weakness of the limbs (usually the legs).



## Transmission

- Polio can spread very easily. A person can spread the virus even if they aren't sick or experiencing symptoms. It can spread through:
  - **Feces (poop):** when an infected person does not wash hands properly after using the bathroom, then touches food or objects that may be placed in another person's mouth.
  - **Sneezes or Coughs:** when droplets of an infected person's phlegm or mucus get in your mouth or nose.
- In communities with lower vaccination rates, polio can spread even more easily.



## Polio in the United States

- In July 2022, a case of polio in an unvaccinated person from Rockland County, N.Y. was reported.
- Poliovirus was also found in wastewater samples (sewage) in several N.Y. locations, suggesting likely local circulation of the virus.
- Getting vaccinated and maintaining high immunity across the N.J. population is the best way to keep N.J. residents and children polio-free.



## Treatment & Prevention

- There is no cure for polio, but it is a vaccine preventable disease.
- The Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) does not cause polio or any other serious problems since it does not contain the live virus.
- While no longer available in the U.S., the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) is offered in other parts of the world and contains the live weakened virus. Sometimes, the weakened virus can mutate (change) and people can shed the contagious virus in their feces for several weeks. These shed viruses can spread to other people and cause disease (this is called a vaccine-derived polio case).
- The IPV also protects people against naturally occurring polioviruses and vaccine-derived polioviruses. Receiving all the recommended doses of vaccine is about 99% effective.\*

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control

August 29, 2023



## Recommended Polio Vaccination Schedule

- Four doses of IPV\*, one dose at each of the following ages:
  - 2 months old
  - 4 months old
  - 6 through 18 months old
  - 4 through 6 years old
- Visit the CDC catch-up schedule if vaccines were not completed during these times: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>.
- Most adults have likely already been vaccinated against poliovirus during childhood. Adults who know or suspect that they are unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated against polio should complete their polio vaccination series with IPV. Adults who completed their polio vaccination but who are at increased risk of exposure to poliovirus may receive one lifetime IPV booster. You may be at increased risk if you are:
  - traveling to a country where the risk of getting polio is greater,
  - working in a laboratory, or healthcare setting and handling specimens that might contain polioviruses, or
  - treating patients who could have polio or had close contact with a person who could be infected with poliovirus.



## Finding Immunization Records

- Check with your healthcare provider or public health clinic to see if they can access your records in the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIIS).
- Ask parents or other caregivers if they have records of your childhood immunizations.
- Try looking through baby books or other saved documents from your childhood.
- Check with your high school and/or college health services for dates of any immunizations.
- Check with previous employers (including the military) that may have required immunizations.



## For More Information

- Contact your healthcare provider.
- Contact your local health department: <https://nj.gov/health/lh>.
- Visit the New Jersey Department of Health website: <https://nj.gov/health>.
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention polio website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/polio>.

\*Any properly spaced combination of OPV (received before April 2016) or IPV doses, is considered a complete poliovirus vaccination series. Serology (bloodwork) to determine immunity for people with no or questionable documentation of poliovirus vaccination is generally not recommended. Ask your healthcare provider for more information.