

Polio

Key Facts:

- Poliomyelitis mainly affects children under the age of five, but it may also affect adults and those who have not completed their vaccination or are immunocompromised.
- In most cases, polio is asymptomatic and spreads rapidly.
- One in 200 cases develops into irreversible paralysis (usually of the legs). Among those paralyzed, 5% to 10% die when their breathing muscles become immobilized.
- Polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988, from an estimated 350 000 cases then, to 1604 reported cases in 2009. This comes as a result of global efforts to eliminate the disease.
- Down from more than 125 in 1988, polio was endemic in only four countries around the world in 2010. The four countries where polio is still endemic are: Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.
- The Polio Eradication Initiative is currently focusing on pockets of transmission that remain persistent in northern India and northern Nigeria and on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- As long as a single child remains infected, children in all countries are at risk of contracting polio. Between 2009 and 2010, 23 previously polio-free countries were re-infected due to imports of the virus.
- In most countries, the global effort has expanded capacities to tackle other infectious diseases by building effective surveillance and immunization systems. Active research within these efforts has enriched the knowledge about the virus causing the disease.
- The success of eradication efforts depends on the possibility of bridging a large fiscal deficit to finance the next steps of the Global Eradication Initiative.

What is Polio?

It is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus that invades the nervous system. The virus sometimes enters the human body (child or adult) through the mouth and multiplies in the intestine. It causes paralysis and can sometimes lead to death due to the paralysis of the muscles responsible for breathing. The virus used to kill many of those who contract it before the vaccine.

Symptoms:

- 90% of people infected with the virus do not show any symptoms.
- 4% to 8% of people with Polio have flu-like symptoms such as fever, fatigue, nausea, headache, stiffness in the neck and back and pain in the extremities.
- 1% permanent paralysis of extremities.
- 5% to 10% of cases die due to paralysis of respiratory muscles.

Complications:

Paralysis that may lead to permanent disability and death.

- **Infection:**
It is transmitted from infected to healthy people through direct contact.
- **Treatment and Prevention:**
Polio is an incurable disease that can only be prevented. Physical therapy with antispasmodic drugs helps relax muscles.
Given multiple times, the vaccine protects a child for life.

Polio Vaccine:

There are two types of polio vaccine:

- Inactivated Polio Vaccine - IPV
- Oral Polio Vaccine - OPV

Who should be vaccinated? Should children and infants be vaccinated?

Children should receive doses of IPV at the following ages:

- One dose at the age of two months.
- One dose at the age of 4 months.
- One dose at the age of 6-8 months.
- Booster dose at the age of 4-6 years.

Do adults need to be vaccinated?

Adults do not need the vaccine at this age as they have received it before at a younger age, except for three specific groups:

- People traveling to areas where the disease is endemic.
- Workers in polio-concerned laboratories.
- Health workers who have direct contact with patients.

These groups should take the vaccine in 3 doses:

- First dose: Anytime.
- Second dose: One or two months after the first dose.
- Third dose: 6-12 months after the second dose.

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For further questions kindly contact us via email:

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