

Polio Fact Sheet

1. **What is Polio?** - Polio is a disease caused by a virus that lives in the human throat and intestinal tract. It is spread by exposure to infected human stool: e.g. from poor sanitation practices. The 1952 Polio epidemic was the worst outbreak in the nation's history. Of nearly 58,000 cases reported that year, 3,145 people died and 21,269 were left with mild to disabling paralysis, with most of the victims being children. The *"public reaction was to a plague"*, said historian William O'Neill. *"Citizens of urban areas were to be terrified every summer when this frightful visitor returned."* A Polio vaccine first became available in 1955.

2. **What are the symptoms of Polio?** - Up to 95 % of people infected with Polio virus are not aware they are infected, but can still transmit it to others. While some develop just a fever, sore throat, upset stomach, and/or flu-like symptoms and have no paralysis or other serious symptoms, others get a stiffness of the back or legs, and experience increased sensitivity. However, a few develop life-threatening paralysis of muscles. The risk of developing serious symptoms increases with the age of the ill person.

3. **Is Polio still a disease seen in the United States?** - The last naturally occurring cases of Polio in the United States were in 1979, when an outbreak occurred among the Amish in several states including Pennsylvania.

4. **What kinds of Polio vaccines are used in the United States?** - There is now only one kind of Polio vaccine used in the United States: the Inactivated Polio vaccine (IPV) is given as an injection (shot). Oral Polio vaccine (OPV) used to be given as drops placed in the mouth but has not been used in the United States since 2000. OPV contained a live Polio virus specially treated to prevent disease. OPV is still given in many parts of the world: e.g. Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

5. **What does getting Polio from the vaccine mean?** - The OPV can be spread person-to-person to others who are not vaccinated against Polio and who come in contact with stool or spit of a recently OPV vaccinated person. Sometimes those exposed to the live OPV virus may develop a form of Polio disease.

6. I've heard that some children have developed Polio as a result of receiving the vaccine. Is this true? - In 2005, a vaccine Polio virus was found in the stools of four unvaccinated Amish children in the state of Minnesota.

7. Where do vaccine Polio viruses come from? - It is likely that any vaccine Polio virus came from a person who received OPV vaccine in another country. OPV is still used in many countries of the world, including Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

8. Should I be concerned if there is a case of OPV Polio in my local community? - Since IPV vaccination generally protects people against all Polio disease, it is unlikely that the vaccine virus would spread in a local well vaccinated community.

9. Who should get Polio vaccine and when? - IPV is an immunization (shot), given in the leg or arm, depending on the recipient's age. Most people get IPV when they are children. If a person has not received the Polio vaccine they should contact their healthcare provider. Children get four doses of IPV:

- a. A dose of IPV at 2 months,
- b. A second dose at 4 months,
- c. A third dose at 6 to 18 months, and
- d. A booster dose at 4 to 6 years.

10. Does Polio still occur naturally? - A campaign to eradicate Polio has been ongoing since the 1990's. The western hemisphere was declared free of Polio in 1994. However, the disease still occurs in a number of countries. As of 2013, Only three polio-endemic countries (countries that have never interrupted the transmission of wild poliovirus) remain—Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

11. For more information about Polio:

Polio Vaccination: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/polio/default.htm>

CDC Global Health: Polio: <http://www.cdc.gov/polio/>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician for specific clinical information.

March 27, 2013