

Polio

FACT SHEET

What is Polio?

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. It invades the nervous system, and can cause total paralysis in a matter of hours. The virus enters the body through the mouth and multiplies in the intestine. One in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis (usually in the legs). Of those paralyzed, 5%-10% die when their breathing muscles become immobilized. There is a worldwide effort to eradicate polio through immunization.

Who Can Get Polio?

Polio mainly affects children under three years of age. Unimmunized individuals are at highest risk for polio.

What are the Symptoms?

The symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Stiffness in the neck
- Pain in the limbs
- Fatigue
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What is the Treatment?

Although there is no cure for polio, medical procedures are available to manage symptoms.

How Can You Prevent Polio?

Every child should get a polio vaccine injection at 2, 4 and 6 months and at 18 months of age. A booster dose at 4-6 years completes the series. (This vaccine is given at the same time as diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus vaccine [DPTP]. Individuals travelling to countries where polio is prevalent should be immunized. Consult a travel clinic.