

Polio Fact Sheet

What is it?

Polio, or poliomyelitis, is an infection caused by the poliovirus. It can cause lifelong paralysis (loss of movement) in the arms or legs. In severe cases, it can lead to death. In the United States (U.S.), polio is very rare, but it still exists in other parts of the world. If polio germs exist anywhere, they can spread when people travel.

How does it spread?

Polio spreads easily from person-to-person. The virus enters the body through the mouth and spreads to others via saliva (spit) or feces (poop).

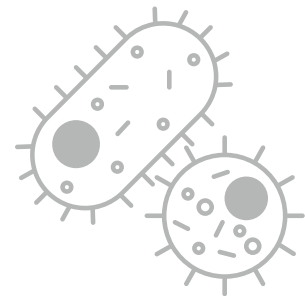
People can come into contact with the virus when:

- They have direct contact, or touch an object contaminated with, the poop of an infected person.
 - This can happen if someone does not wash their hands well with soap and water after going to the bathroom. It is important to wash your hands well after going to the bathroom to get all of the germs off.
 - Objects, such as toys, can also be covered in poop particles. This may be more common in households with young children.
- An infected person coughs or sneezes on them.
- They eat food or drink liquids contaminated with the virus. This can happen if they share food or utensils with an infected person, or if sewage water contaminates food or drink.

An infected person can spread the virus while they are sick and up to 2 weeks after they get better. Even someone who has no symptoms can pass the virus to other people.

What are the symptoms?

- Most people who get infected with polio have no symptoms.
- Some people may have mild flu-like symptoms, including:
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea
 - Fever
 - Headache
 - Tiredness
 - Stomach pain
- Some people may develop more serious symptoms, such as:
 - Meningitis (an infection of the covering of the spinal cord and/or brain).
 - Paralysis (cannot move arms or legs).



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What can I do?

The best way to protect children is to make sure they get a polio vaccine. It is also important to practice good hand hygiene and wash hands often with soap and water. Note that alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill poliovirus.



There is more than one vaccine for polio. In the U.S., children get one (1) dose of the Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV) when they are:

- 2 months,
- 4 months,
- 6-18 months, and
- 4-6 years old.

IPV contains an inactive form of the virus so it cannot cause polio. Children are protected from polio after receiving four (4) doses of the polio vaccine.

If you or your child received the polio vaccine in another country, check with your doctor if you need the U.S. IPV vaccine. Other countries use different vaccines, such as the bivalent Oral Polio Vaccine (bOPV) that may not meet U.S. requirements. If your child received the bOPV, they will need to get the IPV vaccine series.

When should I see a doctor?

There is no cure for polio. Contact your doctor if:

- You think your child has symptoms of polio.
- Your child has been around someone with polio.
- Your child has gone to a country where polio exists and is not vaccinated. To see countries where polio still exists, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Global Polio](#) website.

What are other important things to know?

You can develop post-polio syndrome (PPS) 15-40 years after you first get polio. PPS can cause pain in your muscles and joints. It can also cause paralysis, making it difficult for you to move your body parts. About 25-40% of people who get polio also get PPS later.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.SDIZ.ORG.

CONNECT WITH A COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

CALL: 1 (866) 358-2966 OPTION 5

EMAIL: PHS-IZPHN.HHSA@SDCOUNTY.CA.GOV



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