

Poliomyelitis



Polio is a disease caused by poliovirus. Most people have no symptoms or mild symptoms, but some become paralyzed. Before vaccines, thousands were paralyzed in outbreaks. Wild poliovirus types 2 and 3 are eradicated, but type 1 still spreads in some parts of the world. Vaccination is the best way to prevent polio. There's no cure for polio.

Is polio contagious?

Yes, polio is highly contagious. It spreads easily from person to person.

Can adults get polio?

Yes, adults can get polio. Many adults have immunity, either because they're vaccinated or they've had polio. Adults who aren't vaccinated can get polio if they're exposed to poliovirus.

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What are the types of polio?

Polio can affect your body differently depending on where the virus multiplies and attacks. Types of polio include:

- Abortive poliomyelitis causes flu-like and intestinal symptoms. It only lasts a few days and doesn't cause long-lasting issues.
- Non-paralytic poliomyelitis may cause aseptic meningitis, a swelling of the area around your brain. It causes more symptoms than abortive poliomyelitis and may require you to stay in the hospital.
- Paralytic poliomyelitis happens when poliovirus attacks your brain and spinal cord. It can paralyze the muscles that allow you to breathe, speak, swallow and move your limbs. Depending on what parts of your body are affected, it's called spinal polio or bulbar polio. Spinal and bulbar polio can appear together (bulbospinal polio). Less than 1% of people with polio get paralytic poliomyelitis.
- Polio encephalitis is a rare type of polio that mostly affects infants. It causes brain swelling.
- Post-polio syndrome is when symptoms of polio come back years after a polio infection.

You're most at risk for polio if you aren't vaccinated and you:

- Live in or travel to an area where polio hasn't been eliminated.
- Live in or travel to an area with poor sanitation.
- under 5 years old.
- pregnant.



What are the types and symptoms of polio?

Although polio can cause paralysis and death, most people infected with the virus do not get sick and do not realize they have it. Between 70% and 95% of people infected with the polio virus have no symptoms. Among those with symptoms, most people have the mildest form (abortive polio) with flu-like symptoms and gastrointestinal symptoms. Paralytic polio causes the most serious symptoms, including paralysis.

Non-paralytic poliomyelitis

Some people who develop symptoms from the polio virus develop a form of polio that does not result in paralysis (abortive polio). This usually causes the same mild, flu-like signs and symptoms that are typical of other viral illnesses.

Signs and symptoms, which can last up to 10 days, include:

- fever
- Sore throat
- headache
- vomiting
- fatigue
- Stiffness or back pain

Neck stiffness or pain

- Stiffness or pain in the arms or legs
- Feeling muscle pain or weakness



Paralysis syndrome

This serious form of the disease rarely occurs. Initial signs and symptoms of paralytic polio; Like fever and headache, the signs and symptoms often resemble non-paralytic polio. However, within a week, other signs and symptoms appear, including:

- Loss of involuntary reflexes
- Severe muscle pain or weakness

Loose and weak limbs (flaccid paralysis)

Post-polio syndrome

Post-polio syndrome refers to a group of signs and symptoms that affect some people years after they have had polio. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Weakness and worsening pain in muscles and joints
- fatigue

Muscular atrophy (organic atrophy)

- Breathing or swallowing problems
- Sleep disorders related to breathing, such as sleep apnea
- Low tolerance to low temperatures

How can I prevent polio?

The best way to prevent polio is to get vaccinated. Vaccination is usually done in childhood. If you didn't get vaccinated as a child or don't know if you did, ask your healthcare provider if you should get vaccinated.



Recommended polio vaccination schedule

Doctors recommend four polio shots in childhood:

- First shot at 2 months old.
- Second shot at 4 months old.
- Third shot between 6 and 18 months old.
- Booster shot between 4 and 6 years old.

If you've never been vaccinated for polio and it's recommended you get vaccinated as an adult, you'll get three shots:

- Two doses one to two months apart.
- A third dose six to 12 months after the second.

Adults at higher risk for polio

Your doctor might recommend you get a booster dose of polio vaccine (or get vaccinated as an adult, if you've never been vaccinated) if you:

- Are planning to travel to certain areas of the world where polio still exists.
- Work in a lab where you might come into contact with poliovirus.
- Work with patients who may be exposed to poliovirus.

If you're immune to one type of poliovirus, can you still get polio?

Yes, if you're immune to one type of poliovirus, you're only protected from that type. You can still get polio from one of the other two versions of the virus.

