

Infantile Paralysis

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What is Polio?

Polio is a viral disease, which may affect the central nervous system. Since polio immunization (vaccination) has become widespread, cases of polio are very rare.

Who gets Polio?

Polio is more common in infants and young children and occurs more commonly under conditions of poor hygiene. Paralysis is more common and severe when disease occurs in older individuals.

What are the symptoms Polio?

The symptoms of polio may include fever, malaise, headache, nausea and vomiting, severe muscle pain and stiffness in the neck and back. Some people who develop polio have mild symptoms and others may have no symptoms.

How is Polio spread?

Polio is spread from person-to-person primarily through feces and through respiratory secretions the first week of the illness. The virus may be present in the feces for up to 6 weeks once infected.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms appear between seven days and fourteen days, but may be as short as three days and as long as 35 days, after exposure to the disease.

Is a person with Polio contagious?

Yes, a person with polio is contagious as long as the virus is present in feces. They are most contagious for several days before and after onset of symptoms.

How is Polio treated?

There is no specific treatment for polio.

Is there a vaccine for Polio?

There are currently two types of polio vaccine available. Polio vaccine should be administered to infants at two, four, and 15 months of age. Another dose is administered when the child is between four and six years of age.

How can Polio be prevented?

The best way to prevent polio is through immunization.

Want more information?

Information about polio and other health care related topics is available at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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