

Poliomyelitis (Polio)

What is polio?

Polio is a disease that can damage nerve cells in the spinal cord. In severe cases the person may experience permanent paralysis. Polio is caused by the virus *poliovirus* types one, two and three.

Although polio is rare in Canada, it still occurs in South Asia and in West/Central Africa. Infants and young children are affected most often.

What are the symptoms of polio?

Symptoms of polio include: fever, feeling unwell, headache, nausea and vomiting, severe muscle pain and stiffness of the neck and back, and in some cases, paralysis.

Symptoms can develop between three and 35 days following exposure to the virus, but usually within seven to 14 days afterwards.

How does polio spread?

Poliovirus is found in an infected person's feces and throat secretions. The virus can spread to others if they eat or drink something that has been contaminated by the feces of the infected person. This can happen when there is poor sanitation, poor control of sewage or poor personal hygiene. The virus can also spread through close personal contact with secretions (fluids) from an infected person's nose and throat, from sneezing or coughing for example.

People with polio are most infectious during the first few days before and after onset of symptoms.

How can polio be prevented?

- I. Polio can be prevented through immunization.
 - Infants and children should be routinely immunized with combination vaccines containing inactivated polio vaccine, as outlined in the current Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario.
 - Immunization is also recommended for adults who have never been immunized against polio and who belong to one or more of the following groups:
 - Travellers to areas where polio cases are still occurring
 - Laboratory workers
 - Health care workers in contact with patients excreting polioviruses
 - Residents of communities where visitors or new immigrants/refugees may be excreting polioviruses, related to recent oral polio vaccine immunization or polio infection

For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca

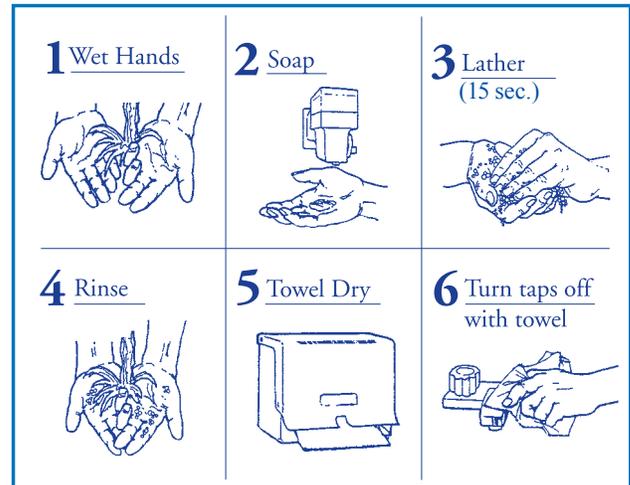


- While booster doses are not routinely given to people who have completed the primary series during childhood, a single booster dose is recommended for people at high risk for exposure, including:
 - Military personnel
 - Workers in refugee camps in endemic areas
 - Travellers to areas where polio is epidemic or endemic

2. Good hand hygiene is important for preventing the spread of polio. Wash hands frequently for at least 15 seconds using the 6-step method, and especially:

- After using the washroom
- After changing diapers
- Before preparing or eating food

3. Drink water from a safe supply. Chlorinate or boil water used for drinking, cooking and washing dishes



What is the treatment for polio?

There is no cure or specific treatment for polio.

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