



## *Hawaii State Department of Health*

### *Disease Investigation Branch*

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#### **Poliomyelitis**

(Infantile Paralysis, Polio)

##### **What is polio?**

Polio is a disease caused by a virus that can damage the nervous system and may cause paralysis and death. With the introduction of polio vaccines in the United States in the 1950's, the number of polio cases has fallen to just a few cases a year. However, polio remains a problem in many areas of the world.

##### **How is it spread?**

Polio can be spread by direct exposure to an infected individual, and rarely, by eating foods contaminated with stools of infected persons.

##### **What are the symptoms of polio?**

The disease can be mild or serious. Some individuals who get the disease have little or no symptoms, but others experience fever, headache, vomiting, severe muscle pain, stiffness in the neck and back, paralysis, and even death.

##### **When do symptoms start?**

The symptoms usually begin 7 to 14 days after exposure to the virus, but the onset may range from 3 to 35 days. Persons with polio are generally most contagious from a few days before, to a few days after the start of symptoms. However, persons infected with polio can transmit the infection for as long as the virus remains in the throat or the stools.

##### **What is the treatment for polio?**

There is no specific treatment for polio, but it is important that a polio patient receive medical care, especially during the early phase of the illness to prevent complications from the disease.

##### **Is there a vaccine for polio?**

Yes. In the United States, the first three doses of inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) are recommended to be given at 2, 4 and 6 to 18 months, with a booster given at age 4-6 years.

Vaccination of adults who reside in the United States is not necessary or recommended. Adults who plan to travel to areas where polio is still a problem should consider getting an IPV booster prior to travel.

##### **Can a person get polio from the vaccine?**

Vaccine-associated paralytic polio (VAPP) is a rare adverse reaction to the live oral polio vaccine that was formerly given in the US. This form of the polio vaccine is no longer licensed for use and since 2000 has not been available in the US. There is no risk of VAPP with IPV.

##### **How do you keep from getting it?**

The best way to keep from getting polio is to make sure you and your children get vaccinated on schedule.

For more information, see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/polio>