



Once a person is infected, there is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented through vaccination before the infection happens. There are two vaccines available: oral polio vaccine and inactivated polio vaccine. Both are effective, safe, and used globally, to ensure the best possible protection to populations worldwide.

The first dose of polio vaccine is given in the first weeks of a child's life. Each additional dose in this primary series further strengthens a child's immunity against polio. Booster doses are given in the following years to sustain this high level of protection. Completing the full schedule of vaccinations according to national recommendations is essential to ensure continuous and life-long protection against the disease.



Is polio still a threat?

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, frequent epidemics made polio one of the most feared diseases in the world. Thanks to vaccination and improved sanitary conditions polio has been largely controlled worldwide. The WHO European Region has been free of endemic transmission of wild poliovirus since 2002. Only one of the three types of wild poliovirus remains in the world, and it is circulating in only two countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan). However, circulating vaccine-derived

polioviruses have been detected in sewage and in people in several countries in recent years, including in the WHO European Region.

Viruses easily cross over country borders, which means that until polio is eradicated globally in all its forms, it remains a threat to the unvaccinated in every country. If a population is fully immunized against polio, it will be protected against the spread of both wild and vaccine-derived strains of poliovirus.

Eradication

Once polio is eradicated, the world can celebrate the delivery of a major global public good that will benefit all people equally, no matter where they live. Success will mean that no child or adult will ever again suffer the terrible effects of lifelong paralysis or death from polio. To reach this goal immunization programmes everywhere must continue to reach all children with life-saving polio vaccines.

