

## What is polio?

Polio (poliomyelitis) is a highly contagious viral infection caused by the poliovirus. One in four people will develop symptoms similar to those seen when someone has influenza (the flu). A smaller proportion of people will develop severe symptoms that affect the brain (causing meningitis) and spinal cord (leading to paralysis).

## How does polio infection happen?

Poliovirus enters the body through the mouth or nose and is spread through person-to-person contact. It is spread mainly by coming into contact with an infected person's feces. Examples include drinking, or swimming in, contaminated water, eating food that was prepared using contaminated water, and touching fecal material and then touching your mouth (i.e., if someone does not wash their hands after using the washroom and then touches an object you later touch). Less commonly, polio can also be spread through close contact with others, such as coughing or sneezing next to someone.

While anyone can catch polio, children under five years of age are at higher risk for catching this disease.

## Immunization is recommended for everyone.

Polio immunization is part of the routine childhood immunization schedule in Canada.

## Polio immunization is safe and effective.

Publicly funded immunization schedules for polio may vary between provinces and territories.



**Talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist,  
or local public health office about getting yourself  
or your child immunized against polio.**