

Polio

Protecting Your Child: What Every Parent Should Know

What is Polio?



Poliomyelitis (polio) is a **highly contagious viral illness** that spreads through contact with infected stool, saliva, or water.

Polio can cause **paralysis**, permanent disability, or death. In some cases, it leads to **lifelong muscle weakness** or breathing problems.

Who's most vulnerable? Infants, young children under 5, and anyone unvaccinated.



Before the vaccine, polio paralyzed over **15,000 children each year** in the U.S. alone.



The Vaccine

- IPV (shot): Introduced in **1955**
- OPV (oral polio vaccine): Drops introduced in 1961, not used in the U.S. since 2000.

How it works:

- IPV uses a **killed (inactivated) virus** to teach the body to recognize and fight polio without any risk of causing the disease.

Dosage:

- **4 doses** given at 2, 4, and 6-18 months and 4-6 years
- Mild side effects: occasional redness or soreness at injection site.



IPV (shot) is the only polio vaccine used in the U.S. today. IPV protects as well as OPV, but is safer with **only mild side effects and no risk of polio**.



Polio has been **eliminated in the U.S. thanks to vaccines**, but still exists in some countries.



Choosing not to vaccinate risks your child's health and the health of those around them.

Is the Vaccine Safe? Yes.

- Over **70 years of use. Improved over time.**
 - IPV (shot) replaced OPV (oral vaccine) in the U.S. in 2000 to eliminate the **rare, but serious risk** of vaccine-associated paralytic polio.
 - IPV is completely inactivated, meaning it **cannot cause** polio.
- **Proven safe** in major studies.
 - Tested in **landmark clinical trials** by Dr. Jonas Salk before its introduction.
 - Reviewed in **decades of real-world data** across millions of children worldwide.
 - Endorsed by **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** for safety and effectiveness.
- Ongoing safety monitoring by **VAERS** and the **Vaccine Safety Datalink**.

Support & Guidance

Talk to your pediatrician or family doctor. They know your child's health and vaccine schedule best.

Trusted Resources: [AAP HealthyChildren.org](https://www.aap.org/healthychildren)

Alternatives?

- There is **no safe alternative** to vaccination. "Natural immunity" comes only after infection which can cause irreversible harm.
- Delaying vaccines increases your child's risk during early, vulnerable years.
- Combination vaccines can minimize the number of shots.
- Alternate schedules are not recommended by major health organizations and leave gaps in protection.



Asking questions means you care. Let's keep working together to keep your child healthy, safe, and strong.

