

Polio can affect children in any community. Everyone in your community has a role to play. Encourage all adults to pay extra attention too children's health, if they notice any case of paralysis in their home, neighbourhood or village that has occurred recently, it needs to be reported to the health worker as soon as possible!

Here is what you need to know:

Any child under 15 years old who was crawling or walking and who suddenly no longer crawls or walks could have been infected with polio, which we need to confirm by doing additional tests and investigations. There are many conditions that present in a similar manner.

If the child is taken to the native healer / religious place for treatment and care, it should also be reported and referred to the nearest health centre or clinic for further investigations.

Why is it important to report it quickly?

Any case of paralysis should be reported promptly at the earliest (ideally within 14 days but can be reported up to 6 months). The sooner the medical workers know about the case, the faster they can run all tests and the certainty of knowing if it is due to polio is higher.

If it is polio, one infected child can infect 200 other children in the community very rapidly and each infected child in turn spreads the virus to other children. In this way polio transmits fast and is not limited by any geographic boundary. Global travel puts everyone at risk. Early reporting can initiate effective response quickly and prevent other children from becoming infected and paralyzed.

Please make sure to use every opportunity to talk to caregivers on the importance of protecting children against polio and encourage caregivers to vaccinate their children in every campaign!

INFLUENCERS FACT SHEET

COMMUNITY LEADERS, TEACHERS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Caregivers listen to you. Therefore, this is how you can help to protect children from polio and especially during outbreaks. Polio is a disease that could keep children crippled for the rest of their lives. You are a trusted source of information; therefore, you play a critical role and have a great responsibility in supporting the decision to vaccinate children in your community.



What is happening?

- There is a polio outbreak in our community and country. There is a risk of further spread of the virus.
- Poliovirus is spreading because there are unimmunized children, which means they are not protected from poliovirus infection and it can easily attack them.
- Polio can cause life-long paralysis and even death.
- There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented through vaccination.
- Multiple doses of the vaccine will help to protect every child in our community against polio.
- All target children, should be vaccinated during every campaign, every time even if they have completed all their routine immunization schedule.

What can you do?

Given your influence you play a key role in educating caregivers and others about vaccination, sanitation, tackling rumours linked to religious or other beliefs. As a leader in your community you need to publicly support polio and routine immunization.

You can explain the following:

What is polio?

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious disease caused by poliovirus, a virus which only affects humans, mostly young children. The virus can cause life-long paralysis or even death in a matter of hours. It usually spreads in communities where children are under immunized.

How is it transmitted?

Polio is very contagious and spreads fast through person-to-person contact. The virus enters the body through the mouth and spreads through contact with the feces (poop) of an infected person. You can get infected with poliovirus if you have feces on your hands and you touch your mouth. Also, you can get infected if you put in your mouth objects or food that are contaminated with feces (poop). The virus can contaminate food and water in unsanitary conditions.

How to protect children from polio?

Vaccination is the only way to protect every child from getting polio.

How safe is the vaccine?

- Vaccines have saved millions of children worldwide and are the best way to protect children from dangerous diseases.
- Polio vaccines are safe, no matter which country they are produced in. Before licensure, vaccines undergo extensive testing and review for safety and efficacy.
- All vaccines provided at the public health centres are effective. They follow the process of licensure and approvals through the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Vaccines do not include any prohibited particles, are and have been effective to save millions of children from polio.

Who should be vaccinated?

- All children identified by health authorities to be at the target age should be vaccinated, even if they are sick. It is important that sick children are immunized, because their immunity levels are lower than those of other children and they need to be protected against the polio virus.
- To provide every child with a life-long protection from polio, every child should complete all doses of routine immunization and be vaccinated during every round of polio campaign.
- Every additional dose during the National or Subnational Immunization Days (NID/SNID) means the child gets additional protection against polio