

Polio vaccine

Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health offers the vaccines recommended for adolescents by the National Health and Medical Research Council in a school vaccination program. Signed parental/guardian consent must be provided.

Your next steps:

- Carefully read this information sheet.
- If you would like your child to be vaccinated against polio, complete the Consent Form and give the signed Consent Form to your child to return to school.
- If you do NOT wish your child to be vaccinated against polio, do NOT complete or return the Consent Form.

Q. What is polio (poliomyelitis)?

Polio is a viral infection caused by the poliovirus that can cause paralysis and death. The majority of people infected with polio do not have any symptoms. A minor illness causing fever, headache, lethargy, nausea and vomiting occurs in about 10% of infected people. While most of these people completely recover, about 2% go on to experience severe muscle pain with back or neck stiffness caused by inflammation of the lining of the brain. Less than 1% of infected people develop severe weakness called acute flaccid paralysis that can affect the limbs, muscles of the head and neck and the muscles that are used for breathing.

Q. How is polio spread?

Polio is spread by close contact with an infected person through contact with very small amounts of faeces (i.e. on unwashed hands) or saliva from an infected person. The polio virus enters the body through the nose or mouth and infection starts in the gut. It then enters the blood stream and is carried to other parts of the body, including the nervous system. Cases are mostly infectious in the 10 days before, and the 10 days after, the onset of symptoms.

Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by triggering the immune system to fight certain infections. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with these infections, their immune system is able to respond more effectively, preventing the disease developing or greatly reducing its severity.

Q. How effective is the polio vaccine?

The 3 dose primary course of polio vaccine is at least 99% effective against the disease.

Q. Who should be vaccinated?

Students who have not received the primary course of polio vaccine (3 doses of vaccine at least 4 weeks apart) should be vaccinated. As most students will have received at least one dose of polio vaccine, up to 2 doses will be offered in Intensive English Centres and parents will be advised to attend their local doctor for the third dose, if required.

Q. Who should not be vaccinated?

Polio vaccine should not be given to people who:

- have had anaphylaxis following a previous dose of vaccine
- have had anaphylaxis following any of the vaccine additives (listed over the page)

Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that may result in unconsciousness and death if not treated quickly. It occurs very rarely after any vaccination. The school immunisation nurses are fully trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis.

Q. What should I do if I have no records or I cannot remember if my child has already received polio vaccine?

Children and adults can be safely vaccinated with polio vaccine if there is no available evidence of previous vaccination with polio vaccine.

Q. What additives does polio vaccine contain?

The vaccine contains phenoxyethanol, formaldehyde, polysorbate 80 and trace amounts of neomycin, streptomycin, polymyxin B and bovine serum albumin.

Additives are included in very small amounts to either assist the vaccine to work or to act as a preservative.

The vaccine was exposed to bovine-derived materials during manufacture.

Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines used in Australia are safe and must pass strict safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In addition, the TGA monitors the safety of vaccines once they are in use.

Q. What are the side effects of polio vaccination?

Side effects are commonly mild and usually involve redness, pain and swelling at the injection site or fever. Serious side effects are extremely rare. More information about side effects is available in the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the vaccine available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination. Parents concerned about side effects after vaccination should contact their GP who should also make a report to the local public health unit.

Q. Should the vaccine be given to a female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant?

No. Any female student who is, or thinks she may be, pregnant should not be vaccinated. On the day of the clinic the vaccination nurse will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student answers yes to this question, she will not be vaccinated. The student will be urged to immediately discuss the issue with her parent/guardian and to seek medical help. She will also be provided with contact details for a health referral service that will provide advice, support and guidance.

Q. What if my child has asthma and takes cortisone or prednisone by a “puffer”?

Polio vaccine can be safely administered to someone who has asthma regardless of which medications they are taking.

Q. Who can consent to vaccination and can consent be withdrawn?

Only parents/guardians can consent to vaccination for students less than 18 years of age. Students aged 18 years and over may consent to their own vaccination

and should complete and sign the Consent Form where ‘Parent/Guardian’ is indicated. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by providing the school with written notification of the withdrawal of consent or telephoning the school to withdraw consent.

Q. How can I access a record of the vaccinations?

Information about your child’s vaccinations will be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history.

Parents can request a copy of their child’s AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time up to their child being 14 years of age, and students aged 14 years and over can request their own immunisation history statement, as follows:

- using the Medicare online account through [myGov my.gov.au/](http://myGov.my.gov.au/)
- using the Medicare Express Plus App www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/expressplus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809.

Q. What can I do if my child missed out on the vaccine at school because of illness or absence on the day of the nurses’ visit?

If vaccination has been missed at school, catch-up should occur as soon as possible. Parents should contact their local GP or pharmacist to arrange vaccination.

Q. What will happen to my child’s information?

The information you provide on the Consent Form is subject to strict confidentiality and privacy protections contained in NSW and Commonwealth legislation (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into a NSW Health immunisation register and then uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child’s existing immunisation history and viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

More information is available:

- by visiting the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by contacting your local public health unit on 1300 066 055