

# Polio immunisation

Consumer factsheet – November 2022

**OFFICIAL**

## Key messages

- Polio is a preventable life-threatening disease.
- Poliovirus is very contagious and spreads through person-to-person contact.
- Poliovirus symptoms vary from no symptoms or mild flu-like symptoms to paralysis and possibly death.
- 1 in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis.
- Immunisation is the best protection against polio.
- Children and adults who have not been fully vaccinated against polio are at greatest risk of catching polio, if exposed to an infected person.

## Polio immunisation for children

- Polio vaccine is provided free of charge under the [National Immunisation Program](#) for all young children and for young people aged up to 19 years requiring catch-up immunisation.
- Every child needs to have 4 doses of polio vaccine, at 2, 4 and 6 months, and again at 4 years.
- Children and teenagers who have not had all their polio vaccinations should receive catch-up vaccination.

## Polio immunisation for adults

- Adults who don't have evidence of prior polio vaccination should be vaccinated against polio. Catch-up vaccination of adults includes 3 doses of vaccine.
- People who plan to travel internationally should make sure they and their families are fully vaccinated against polio before departure.
- Adults should receive a polio vaccine booster dose every 10 years if they are travelling overseas where polio is present. Global situation
- Polio has been eliminated from most of the world, including Australia, but still occurs in some countries.
- Until global eradication of polio is achieved, all countries are at risk of polio infection being re-introduced.
- Poliovirus is present currently in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel, Ukraine, United Kingdom, many parts of Africa, and has recently been detected in New York state, in wastewater and in a human case. Poliovirus has also been detected in wastewater in some of these countries which suggests the virus is spreading between people in these countries. A current list of countries that have circulating poliovirus can be found on the [Global Polio – Centres for Disease Control and Prevention page](#).

# Polio immunisation rates in Victoria

In several parts of Victoria, immunisation rates in children are lower than the national target and/or have declined over the past two years (2021 – 2022). This may be related to disruptions to routine immunisation schedules and delays in access to immunisation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Importance of immunisation

Many diseases are no longer common or have been eliminated in Australia due to immunisation. However, these diseases can still be acquired through overseas travel, or contact with a returned traveller who has been infected. The risk is greatest for those who have not been fully vaccinated. Polio is one example, but other conditions include measles and diphtheria which can cause severe disease and death, particularly in children.

[Immunisation](#) is one of the best ways you can protect yourself, your children and future generations from [infectious diseases](#).

## More information

For further information on polio, or polio vaccination see:

- [Better Health Channel – Why immunisation is important](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Why-immunisation-is-important)  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Why-immunisation-is-important>
- [Better Health Channel – Polio immunisation](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/polio-immunisation)  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/polio-immunisation>
- [Better Health Channel – Polio and the late effects of polio](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/polio-and-post-polio-syndrome)  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/polio-and-post-polio-syndrome>
- [Better Health Channel – Immunisation](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/immunisation)  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/immunisation>
- [Better Health Channel – Infections bacterial and viral](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/infections-bacterial-and-viral)  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/infections-bacterial-and-viral>
- [Department of Health and Aged Care – National Immunisation Program Schedule](https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/national-immunisation-program-schedule)  
<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/national-immunisation-program-schedule>
- [Department of Health and Aged Care - National Immunisation Program](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program)  
<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/national-immunisation-program>
- [Global Polio – Centres for Disease Control and Prevention page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/global-polio)  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/global-polio>

## Where to get help

- Your [GP \(doctor\)](#)
- Local government immunisation service
- [Maternal and Child Health Line](#) (24 hours) Tel. [132 229](#)
- [NURSE-ON-CALL](#) Tel. [1300 60 60 24](#) for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Immunisation Unit, Department of Health, Victorian Government Email: [immunisation@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au)

- [Smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au), Australian Government Tel. [1300 555 135](tel:1300555135) (from within Australia) or [+61 2 6261 3305](tel:+61262613305) (from overseas)
- [National Immunisation Information Line](https://www.immunisation.gov.au) Tel. [1800 671 811](tel:1800671811)
- [SAFEVIC](https://www.safevic.vic.gov.au) Tel. [1300 882 924](tel:1300882924) (choose option 1) – the line is attended between 9 am and 4 pm and you can leave a message at all other times

To receive this publication in an accessible format [email the Immunisation Unit](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au) <immunisation@health.vic.gov.au>.

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