



Department of Health

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PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY FROM POLIO

Polio is a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease. There is no cure, but there are safe and effective vaccines.

In July 2022, a case of paralytic polio was detected in an unvaccinated young, previously healthy adult in Rockland County and since then, the virus has been found in sewage in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, and Nassau counties, and New York City.

Polio is highly contagious. One case can spread to hundreds of people. Most people who are infected do not know that they have polio and can unwittingly spread the virus to others.

Help prevent another polio outbreak and protect your family and community by following these tips:

- **Make sure you and your family are up to date on the polio vaccine.** Immunization is the single best protection against polio. The first polio immunization should be given at 2 months of age and children are considered fully protected once they have received 4 doses of a polio-containing vaccine by age 6. It's important to start immunizations during infancy and follow the recommended schedule to ensure that babies and young children are protected.
- **Wash your hands often with soap** and clean running water for 20 seconds and then dry them with a clean towel. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not work against the virus that causes polio.
- **Find out if pools, spas, or spray pads are adequately disinfected and if not, do not use them.** Chlorine and bromine kill the virus that causes polio.
- **Avoid pools, spas, and spray pads if you have an upset stomach or diarrhea.** Polio can be in poop. Shower before you get in the water and don't swallow the water.
- **Protect others by staying home or keeping your family home from camp or other activities when sick.** Polio lives in the throat and intestines of a person. Polio can be spread from one person to another through coughing, sneezing, or unknowingly touching something that has been contaminated by droplets from a sneeze, cough, or poop.
- **Practice good health habits that can reduce the spread of polio and other illnesses too:**
 - **When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue.** Put used tissues in the garbage and wash your hands right away. If a tissue isn't handy, cough or sneeze into your upper arm, not your hands.
 - **Clean frequently touched surfaces often.** This includes items such as toys, doorknobs, desks, tables, and counters. Disinfect surfaces with a solution of 0.5% bleach by mixing 1 part regular unscented household bleach with 10 parts water. Only use a bleach product that contains 5-9% sodium hypochlorite when making this solution and do not use scented or splashless bleach.
 - **Do not share eating utensils, cups, or plates without washing them between uses.** Viruses are spread when utensils, cups, and plates are shared before being properly washed.
 - **Do not put your fingers in your mouth, rub your eyes, or touch your face,** especially after touching an object that may be contaminated.

Please contact your healthcare provider or local health department if you have any questions.