

Polio Vaccine (IPV)

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

What is the polio vaccine (IPV)?

The polio vaccine protects against infection from all 3 types of polio virus. The vaccine, called Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV), is approved by Health Canada.

Who should get the polio vaccine?

The inactivated polio vaccine is mostly given as a booster dose to adults who had a series of polio vaccine in childhood and are at increased risk of exposure to polio virus. Examples of adults at increased risk include those who will be working or traveling in an area of the world where polio still occurs and health care workers, including laboratory workers, who may be exposed to human feces (stool).

People who have not been immunized and may be exposed to polio virus, for example through work or travel, should also get the vaccine. These people need 3 doses of the vaccine. The first 2 doses are given 4 to 8 weeks apart. The third dose is given 6 to 12 months after the second dose.

In young children, immunization against polio is combined with other vaccines, such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib).

For more information on the combined vaccines, see:

- [HealthLinkBC File #15b Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, *Haemophilus influenzae* Type b \(DTaP-IPV-Hib\) Vaccine](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #105 Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Hepatitis B, Polio, and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b \(DTaP-HB-IPV-Hib\) Vaccine](#)

A series of inactivated polio vaccine can also be given to infants and children who have already received protection from diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and Hib in other vaccines.

What are the benefits of the polio vaccine?

The polio vaccine is the best way to protect against polio, a serious and sometimes fatal disease. When you get immunized, you help protect others as well.

What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get polio disease.

Common reactions to the vaccine may include fever, and soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by

ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the polio vaccine?

Speak with a health care provider if you or your child has had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any polio vaccine or any part of the vaccine, including neomycin, streptomycin or polymyxin B.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns speak with your health care provider.

What is polio?

Polio is a disease caused by infection with the polio virus. While most polio infections show no symptoms, others can result in paralysis of arms or legs and even death. Paralysis occurs in about 1 in 200 people infected with the polio virus.

Polio can be spread by contact with the stool of an infected person. This can happen by eating food or drinking water contaminated with stool.

Due to immunization, polio has been eliminated in most parts of the world. In 1994, Canada was certified as a “polio free” country. However, until polio is eliminated globally, immunization is the best protection.

Mature minor consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. For more information on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The Infants Act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
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