



POLIOMYELITIS (POLIO) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS POLIO?

Polio is an infectious disease caused by a virus. The virus can live in an infected person's feces for many weeks. It can contaminate food and water in unsanitary conditions.

HOW DO YOU GET POLIO?

The virus spreads from person to person. The virus lives in an infected person's throat and intestines. It enters the body through the mouth and spreads through contact with the feces of an infected person and, though less common, through droplets from a sneeze or cough. An infected person may spread the virus to others immediately before and about 1 to 2 weeks after symptoms appear. People who don't have symptoms can still pass the virus to others and make them sick.

SYMPTOMS

Most people who get infected with poliovirus will not have any visible symptoms. About 1 out of 4 people with poliovirus infection will have flu-like symptoms that may include: sore throat, fever, tiredness, nausea, headache, and stomach pain. These symptoms usually last 2 to 5 days then go away without treatment. A smaller amount of people will poliovirus infection will develop more serious symptoms that affect the brain and spinal cord with paralysis being the most severe symptom. For nonparalytic polio, symptoms typically appear 3 to 6 days after being infected. For paralytic polio, paralysis usually begins 7 to 21 days after being infected.

TREATMENT

Currently there is no cure for polio. Treatment involves supportive care. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

PREVENTION

The best way to protect against polio is to get the polio vaccine. Doctors recommend all children get the vaccine.

DGHD EFFORTS

The Delaware Public Health District (DPHD) offers the inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV). Please call (740) 203-2040 to schedule an appointment. Reports of suspected and confirmed cases of disease are made to the DPHD. The DPHD investigates potential sources of illness, conducts surveillance for the spread of disease, and engages in community outreach and education.