



Polio Vaccine

What You Need to Know

Deployment Medication Information Sheets (DMIS) are provided by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM). Written for soldiers and their families, they provide basic information on deployment medications that are intended as guidance only; consult your health care provider for more information.

What is polio?

Polio, also known as poliomyelitis, is a viral illness characterized by two phases:

- The first phase is a nonspecific illness associated with a fever.
- The second phase (which occurs in a small percentage of cases) involves inflammation of the covering around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis). This results in the following symptoms: severe headache, fever, and neck stiffness, and may lead to a tingling sensation in the arms and legs, increased weakness, and paralysis.

How do you get polio?

It is transmitted primarily from person to person through respiratory or fecal-oral transmission.

Who should get the vaccine and how is it given?



- Vaccination should have been given upon entrance to the military. It is recommended for unimmunized or partially immunized adults.
- Two forms of the vaccine have been available, the live oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV) and an injectable, inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV). To eliminate the risk for vaccine-associated paralytic poliomyelitis, OPV is no longer recommended for routine immunization in the United States. OPV remains the vaccine of choice, however, for global polio eradication.
- It is critical to follow your health care provider's instructions exactly and complete the entire treatment series. The primary series for IPV is 3 doses; the second 4 to 8 weeks after the first; and a third dose 6 to 12 months after the second. All the doses of vaccine have to be taken before full protection against polio occurs.

What does the military require?

The vaccine is required for military recruits lacking the primary immunization series. Boosters are not routinely administered unless there is deployment to an area that has an exceptionally high risk of exposure to the poliovirus.

Are there any side effects?

- In general, this vaccine is safe and the benefits of the vaccine to prevent polio are very important.
- Very rarely, vaccine-associated paralytic poliomyelitis has occurred in persons receiving the oral polio vaccine or in close contacts of vaccinated persons.
- Polio risk is higher for persons (including close contacts of the person receiving the oral vaccine) with immune system problems such as HIV or certain cancers.
- The vaccine may cause fever or rash.

Is there any reason I shouldn't get the vaccine?

- Before taking the vaccine, tell your health care provider your medical history, including any allergies (especially drug allergies), immune system disorders, cancer, and certain blood disorders, and any current diarrhea, vomiting, or fever/illness.
- The oral vaccine should not be given to persons who have close contact with people who have immune system problems. If a close contact receives this oral vaccine, contact should be avoided for 6 to 8 weeks or as directed. If contact must occur, precautions to avoid stool or saliva contact are recommended. Thorough hand washing after diaper changes in infants receiving the vaccine is recommended for adults who never have received the polio vaccine.
- Tell your health care provider if you're taking any over-the-counter or prescription medicine, especially steroids or prednisone.
- This vaccine temporarily interferes with tuberculosis (TB) skin tests. Any planned TB tests should be done before, with, or 4 weeks after use of this vaccine.
- There is a decreased effect if given with immunoglobulin, immunosuppressive agents, or cholera or yellow fever vaccines within 1 month of vaccination.

What if I'm pregnant or breast-feeding?

- This medication should be used only when clearly needed during pregnancy. Discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor.
- This vaccine may be excreted into breast milk. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose for any reason, get the missed dose as soon as possible and then continue the injection schedule. Do NOT re-start the vaccination series.

You *can* avoid getting polio!

- Get each vaccination as scheduled.
- Maintain good hygiene and sanitation standards

Be sure the vaccination is recorded in your medical record.

Where can I get more information?

- Health care provider at your military treatment facility.
- Military Immunizations web page: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/immunization/vaccines.html>
- CDC Specific Disease web site: www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm
- CDC Vaccine Information web site: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/default.htm

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