

been designed with consideration to both vaccine safety and disease susceptibility. As such, any time you delay a vaccine, you unnecessarily leave your baby vulnerable to disease.

Can I protect my baby from polio by breastfeeding them?

If you were vaccinated for polio, it is possible that your baby may benefit from antibodies received before birth or from breastfeeding. But even if antibodies are passed to the baby, the amount of antibodies passed on may not be enough and will only offer protection for a short time before they break down. Only by vaccinating your young baby will they have their own long-lived protection against this infection.

My child has a cold. Can they still be vaccinated?

Yes, children experiencing mild illnesses, such as colds, a low fever, an ear infection, or mild diarrhea, can still receive a vaccine. Mild illness does not affect how well the body responds to a vaccine and vaccines do not make a mild illness worse. Children taking antibiotics can get vaccines.

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**If you or your child are not vaccinated yet,
talk to your physician or healthcare provider.**



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POLIO: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

What is polio?

Polio is caused by a highly contagious virus. Though most people who get infected with polio virus don't feel sick at all, others develop a sore throat, fever, headache, stomach pain or vomiting. Still others, about 1 in 25 infected persons, develop meningitis - a stiff neck and severe muscle pain caused when the virus infects their brain and spinal cord. Approximately 1 out of 200 people develop irreversible paralysis, known as paralytic poliomyelitis. If the muscles we use to breathe become paralyzed, the person can die.

How does polio spread?

Polio spreads from person to person. It spreads when the stool or respiratory secretions of an infected person are introduced into the mouth of another person directly or through contaminated hands, objects, food, or water. The virus reproduces in the intestines and throat and is passed in the stool. Infected people without symptoms can still spread the virus. People with polio may be contagious as long as the virus is present in the throat and stool. The virus remains in the throat for about one to two weeks and in the stool for about three to six weeks after the onset of illness.

I've heard that people can get polio from the vaccine. How does this happen?

There are two types of polio vaccines. One, called "inactivated polio vaccine" (IPV), is given as a shot. It contains dead polio virus that cannot reproduce in people. This is the version used in the U.S. The other, called "oral polio vaccine," (OPV) is given by mouth and is not available in the US. It contains live, weakened polio virus. Because the virus can still reproduce at low levels, recently vaccinated people can shed the virus in their stools. Very rarely, the weakened OPV vaccine viruses can regain the ability to infect the brain or spinal cord. This can cause paralytic poliomyelitis in the person who had recently received OPV or in their unvaccinated close contacts (1 person per 2.6 million doses). If such a virus begins to circulate among unvaccinated people, polio outbreaks can occur.

So, is there a chance that my child gets polio from the vaccine if I choose to vaccinate?

No. OPV is still given in some countries, including Israel, but it is no longer used in the U.S. IPV is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the U.S. since 2000. Because the virus in IPV cannot make more copies of itself, it cannot cause polio, either in the person receiving the vaccine or those around them.

I keep my home clean and am careful with food in my kitchen, isn't this protective against polio?

Household hygiene and safe food handling practices are helpful in preventing infections that spread on food, such as salmonella, but polio virus is different. It is *very* contagious and passes easily between people, even those without symptoms.

I give my child good nutrition. Doesn't this protect my child from actually getting sick from polio?

A healthy diet is important for your children's well-being and for building a healthy immune system. But even strong, healthy children got polio and some suffered complications, such as paralysis and death, prior to the introduction of polio vaccines. *Polio vaccination with IPV is the only clear way to protect your child from paralytic poliomyelitis.*

How effective is the IPV vaccine?

The IPV vaccine is safe and effective and protects almost all children from paralysis (more than 99 out of 100) who get the recommended number of doses. Children should get four doses of polio vaccine, given at 2 months, 4 months, 6 to 18 months, and 4-6 years of age. Side effects of the vaccine can include pain, redness or swelling at the site of the shot. These typically resolve after 1-2 days. Adults who were fully vaccinated as children and who are at risk of exposure now should get one adult booster dose vaccine.

My baby is so young. Isn't this vaccine just too strong for my baby? Shouldn't I wait to vaccinate until my child is older and stronger?

The recommended dose of the vaccine is the right strength for your baby. The IPV vaccine has been safely given to millions of young babies throughout the U.S. since the mid-1950s. The vaccine schedule has been