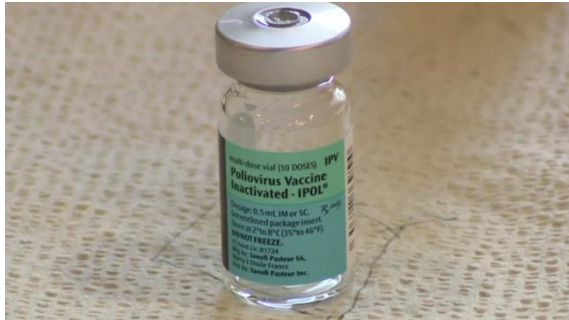


Health experts warn children need to be up to date on polio vaccinations

In the United Kingdom, where polio has also been detected, they are ordering polio booster shots for children up to the age of 9. That hasn't happened here yet, even though polio has been detected in wastewater monitoring in New York, which is why health officials are urging parents to be aware of their child's polio vaccination status.



Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and on the heels of a monkeypox outbreak, health officials are now warning that polio vaccination needs to be a top priority for those who are unvaccinated. "Finding polio in a country where we've found high levels of vaccination, haven't seen polio cases for over 40 years, is significant. This is just the tip of the iceberg - the very, very tip of the iceberg," said Dr. Jose Romero, director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

It all started in suburban New York City, when a polio case of paralysis struck someone who was unvaccinated. Wastewater testing in the city found evidence that the virus is circulating there. Experts believe the culprit is a version of polio derived from an oral version of the polio vaccine, which is not used in the United States, but is administered in other countries.

"If we do wastewater sampling in more locations in the United States, it would not be surprising to see these same vaccine derived viruses circulating in other parts of the country," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar with the [Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health](#).

Prior to the development of the polio vaccine in the 1950s, the virus killed or paralyzed an average of 15,000 children each year. However, after the vaccine became widely available, that number dropped to merely 100 cases in total during the 1960s and about 10 cases in the 1970s, [according to the CDC](#).

While there is no cure for polio, there is a vaccine and Dr. Adalja said adults who are vaccinated against polio have nothing to worry about.

"I would say that most adults, unless they know otherwise, are probably vaccinated because they went through the schooling system in the United States, which requires it as a condition of acceptance," Dr. Adalja said.

When it comes to today's young people, though, he said parents need to make sure their children are up to date on their polio vaccine shots, which are usually spread out in four doses until the age of six.

"Polio is only a problem for the unvaccinated," Dr. Adalja said. "These vaccine-derived strains will not be a threat to a vaccinated person, and the only reason that they are a threat now is that we've let our vaccination rates slip so low in parts of the United States."

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"When you see a signal like this it should be an alarm for every parent, for every pediatrician, to ensure that every child is fully vaccinated," said Dr. Richard Besser of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

It is an effort underway to make sure a virus thought to be in the past doesn't make a full comeback.

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