

# Polio Vaccine

**Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.**

## Polio is a vaccine preventable disease.

- **Polio** (poliomyelitis) is caused by 3 types of poliovirus (type 1, type 2 and type 3).
- Due to immunization, type 2 poliovirus has been eliminated worldwide. However, types 1 and 3 are still found in certain countries.
  - **FACT:** Canada was certified as a 'polio free' country in 1994.
- Polioviruses are in the stool of infected people. If stool contaminates hands, water or food, others can become infected within 3 to 35 days.
- Polio symptoms include fever, tiredness, headache, nausea and vomiting.
- Some polio cases show no symptoms, while 1% of polio cases results in paralysis of the breathing muscles (which is life threatening), arms or legs, and meningitis.
- There is no known treatment for polio and previously infected people can become infected again with another type of poliovirus.
- Some people develop muscle weakness ('postpolio syndrome') many years after they had polio.

## How can polio be prevented?

- Be immunized. When you / your child get immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g. handwashing).

## Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Those who have not completed an appropriate primary series including children, select healthcare workers and students, and travellers.
- **NOTE:** For young children, the polio vaccine is combined with other vaccines, such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b.

## Who should not get this vaccine?

- **A mild illness, with or without a fever, is not a reason to avoid immunization.**
- Individuals who have a serious illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a polio-containing vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.

## What are common reactions to this vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe and effective. It is much safer to get this vaccine than to get this serious and contagious disease.**
- Temporary soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Some individuals may experience fatigue, headache, mild fever or dizziness.
- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips.

### **If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.**

This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of the risk of Reye syndrome.

### **Who should you report reactions to?**

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

### **Talk to a public health nurse:**

- If you have questions or concerns about your or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you had to take your child to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunization.

### **What does this vaccine contain?**

**IMOVAX® Polio** contains purified inactivated poliomyelitis viral strains (types 1, 2 and 3), 2-phenoxyethanol, and traces of formaldehyde, calf serum protein, neomycin, streptomycin, polymyxin B, and medium 199 Hanks. Thimerosal-free. Latex-free.

**For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.**

Reference: IMOVAX® Polio product monograph (2011).

### **Mature Minor Consent**

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

To ensure that a complete immunization record is maintained, every immunization administered to an individual will be documented by Public Health into the electronic provincial immunization registry, known as Panorama. Panorama is a secure electronic system used in Saskatchewan to record and manage immunization records and the health information related to immunization for all Saskatchewan residents. Immunization records may be shared with other health care professionals to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases. Information about Panorama is detailed in the "Protecting the Privacy of Your Immunization Record" fact sheet.