

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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### Polio 101

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages parents and guardians to make sure children are up to date on regularly scheduled immunizations to protect them from 14 vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), polio, or poliomyelitis, is a disabling and potentially deadly disease. It is caused by the poliovirus. This virus is very contagious; it spreads from person to person through contact with virus particles in the air, on surfaces, in food, or water. It can infect a person's spinal cord, causing paralysis (not being able to move parts of your body). There is no cure for polio.

Before the invention of the polio vaccine, outbreaks occurred frequently across the United States. The most severe polio outbreak was in the 1950s, with around 16,000 children affected by this disease. In 1955 Dr Jonas E. Salk and his colleagues licensed the first polio vaccine, after which cases of polio dropped dramatically. From 1979 until just recently, no cases of polio were reported in the United States except for a few related to travel from other countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988 as a result of the global effort to eradicate the disease. More than 16 million people have been saved from paralysis and 1.5 million childhood deaths have been prevented. In 1994, North America and South America were certified polio-free. In July of 2022 the first case of polio in the U.S. in a decade was reported in New York state. This case was not related to travel and was in a person that was unvaccinated against polio.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that **children get four doses of polio vaccine**. They should get one dose at each of the following ages: 2 months, 4 months, 6 through 18 months, and 4 through 6 years. Most adults in the US were vaccinated for polio as a child and are likely to be protected against this virus. However, if you will be traveling to an area of the world where you may be exposed to polio, talk to your doctor about getting a polio vaccination.

If you have questions about polio or any immunizations, call Melissa Propp, RN Public Health Nurse at (308) 345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov). Call (308) 345-4223 one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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