

CDRS

Communicable Disease Reporting System

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FACT SHEET

POLIO

POLIOMYELITIS

Polio is caused by the poliovirus, which enters a person's body through the mouth. It does not always cause serious illness, but it may cause paralysis (unable to move arm or leg). It can be fatal when it paralyzes the muscles that help us breathe. The last case of naturally occurring Polio in the United States was in 1979. Several countries in Africa and Asia still have cases of Polio.

Symptoms

- Poliovirus can cause meningitis, symptoms of which are stiffness of the neck, headache, high fever, discomfort when looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness. These symptoms usually occur after the patient has had a mild cold.
- Polio can also cause paralysis. The paralysis will usually occur on just one side of the body, and the patient will still have feeling in the affected area (it will not go numb).
- At first, the patient will have severe muscle aches and spasms in the limbs or back, followed by a loss of limb function.
- Eventually, strength may return and many people recover completely.

Transmission

- Polio is caused by a virus that enters the body through the mouth and lives in the gastrointestinal tract.
- Poliovirus is very contagious, especially 7-10 days before symptoms start.
- Poliovirus can remain in the stool for up to 3-6 weeks.
- Person-to-person spread of poliovirus via the fecal-oral route is the most important route of transmission. This means that people who are carrying the virus in their stool can give it to someone else if they do not practice good hygiene after using the bathroom.

Treatment

- There is presently no cure for polio. Treatment involves keeping the person comfortable and treating the symptoms.

Prevention

- In the last 40 years, polio has been nearly eliminated by the polio vaccine. When administered properly, it is more than 99% effective at preventing polio.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.

Franklin County



Board of Health

Report Disease With Ease - 24 hours a day

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Columbus and Franklin County Communicable Disease Reporting System

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