

Suspect Polio?

What are the symptoms of paralytic polio?

Most people with poliovirus infection have no symptoms or only a non-specific febrile illness. In rare cases, a person will develop acute flaccid weakness of the limbs.

- Progression of weakness is rapid and often associated with fever and muscle pain.
- Weakness is typically asymmetric and more severe proximally than distally.
- Deep tendon reflexes are absent or diminished.
- Bulbar paralysis can result in respiratory distress and often requires mechanical ventilation.
- History of fever, sore throat, nausea, and malaise up to one week before weakness onset.

What should you do if you have a suspected case of paralytic polio?

1. Only healthcare workers **with evidence of poliovirus immunity** should attend the patient. For adults this is the documentation of at least three doses of poliovirus-containing vaccine. Self-reported doses or a reported history of poliomyelitis should not be accepted.
2. Practice good hand hygiene and contact precautions when interacting with patient.
3. Evaluate the patient for flaccid weakness and document tone, reflexes, and muscle strength.
4. Poliomyelitis has been classified as immediately notifiable, extremely urgent. **Contact the state or local health department immediately to report a patient with suspected poliomyelitis.**
5. Work with the state and local health department to order poliovirus testing:
 - Collect appropriate stool (whole stool) and throat specimens (OP swab): 2 specimens of each type taken at least 24 hours apart during the first 14 days after onset of paralytic disease.
 - Store specimens at -20°C and ship frozen.
6. For questions, contact the CDC Emergency Operations Center at 770-488-7100.

Suspect paralytic polio if:

- Acute flaccid limb weakness
- Often asymmetric
- Proximal muscles affected more than distal muscles
- Low muscle tone
- Decreased or absent reflexes
- History of recent travel to areas or countries where the risk of polio is high or contact with someone who could be infected with polio
- Unvaccinated or incomplete polio vaccination

Watch out for:

- Difficulty speaking or swallowing
- Respiratory distress



Polio often affects lower limbs and patients might have leg pain.



Weakness in the upper arm(s), shoulder(s) and neck is also possible.

Resources



Polio Case Definition and Diagnosis:
<https://www.cdc.gov/polio/what-is-polio/hcp.html>



Proximal Weakness Evaluation:
<https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-mylitis/hcp/clinicians-health-departments/evaluation-weakness.html>



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention