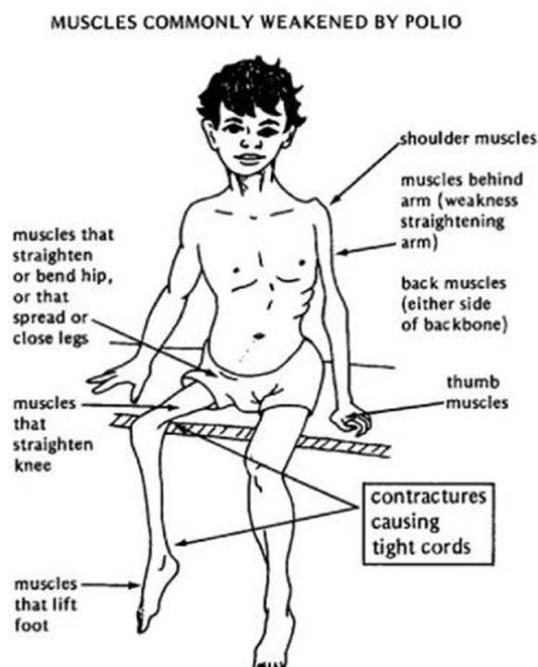


Figures Talk

Polio outbreak in Ukraine

What is polio?

- **Polio** is a highly infectious and sometimes fatal disease caused by **virus** that invades the nervous system.
- The polio virus **spreads** from person to person via faeces and saliva especially in contaminated food and water.
- Polio mainly affects children **under five**. But can paralyze or kill a child of any age if not fully vaccinated.
- There is no cure for polio, but it can be prevented by **immunization**. Polio vaccine, given multiple times, **can protect a child for life**.



Is a polio outbreak confirmed in Ukraine?

- **Yes**. This has been confirmed by WHO and CDC - the world's top authorities in polio surveillance on the basis of laboratory findings from Ukraine.
- **Two** cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus have been confirmed in stool samples from children in Zakarpattya region. These two children, one aged **four** years and the other **10** months, were not vaccinated against polio and became paralysed after contracting the virus. This virus has been in circulation for quite some time and in the meantime has mutated – changed – becoming a threat to all non-immunised children in Ukraine.
- The polio outbreak occurred because of the chronically low immunization coverage in the country. Less than **50%** of children were un- or under-immunized in 2014, and in 2015 the level of immunization against polio among children under 1 year of age has dropped further to **14%**.
- At least **95%** of children should be vaccinated to ensure community immunity.

What happens in a polio outbreak?

- One in every 200 persons infected with polio virus are paralyzed for life. Others have no symptoms but can still pass on the disease.
- Among those paralyzed, **5%-10% die** when their breathing muscles are immobilized by the virus.
- In 2010, during the last polio outbreak in Europe in **Tajikistan** the virus killed **29** children and left more than **480** people paralyzed. The disease spread to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan with **18** identified cases and one death.

What needs to be done to stop the outbreak in Ukraine?

- **3.3 million** children under 6 must be vaccinated in two rounds of immunisation activities in response to the outbreak.
- It should be followed by one round of immunization activities for children under 10 reaching estimated **4.9 million** children.
- Routine immunization must ensure **500,000 new-borns** are vaccinated **annually** with three doses of polio vaccine during their first year of life.

Could polio in Ukraine threaten other countries?

- **Yes.** The polio outbreak in Ukraine or indeed anywhere in an age of global travel presents an **international risk**. Until polio is eradicated globally, there is always a threat of re-emergence.
- Worldwide, as many as **200,000 new cases** could be seen every year, within 10 years, if polio is not eradicated from the last remaining strongholds.

How is the world fighting polio?

- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has reduced polio by **99%** in the last 25 years, from **350,000** cases in 1988 to **243** cases in 2014.
- More than **10 million** people are walking today who otherwise would have been paralysed.
- The global partners are mobilised to help Ukraine to fight polio.