

nOPV2 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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The Vaccine

What is nOPV2 and why is it needed?

The novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) is a new tool that GPEI partners are deploying to better address type 2 circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPV2).

Circulating [vaccine-derived polioviruses](#) (cVDPV) can occur when the weakened strain of the poliovirus contained in the oral polio vaccine (OPV) circulates in communities with low immunization coverage for a long period of time and genetically reverts to a form that can cause paralysis. cVDPV2 outbreaks have increased in scope and frequency in recent years. nOPV2 is a next-generation version of the existing type 2 monovalent OPV (mOPV2) vaccine used to respond to cVDPV2 outbreaks. Clinical trials have shown that nOPV2 is safe and provides comparable protection against poliovirus while being more genetically stable than mOPV2 and therefore less likely to be associated with emergence of cVDPV2 in low immunity settings. This means that nOPV2 has the potential to be a significant new tool to help stop cVDPV2 outbreaks in a more sustainable way and achieve a polio-free world.

How far along is nOPV2’s clinical development?

A dedicated consortium of experts has been working on nOPV2 development since 2011. One phase I and two phase II trials have been completed with the vaccine tested in adults, young children, and infants. Additional studies are underway in order to enhance nOPV2’s already strong evidence base and help achieve WHO prequalification. Results and publications are updated as they become available on the nOPV2 web page of the GPEI website: <http://polioeradication.org/nOPV2>.

Is the vaccine safe and does it provide immunity?

Clinical trials have demonstrated that nOPV2 is safe and efficacious. The first in-human clinical trial was conducted in 2017 at the University of Antwerp and found nOPV2 to be safe and efficacious in providing immunity against polio. [The Lancet](#) published these findings in June 2019. Key phase II trials carried out

across sites in Belgium and Panama showed similarly encouraging results for safety, immunogenicity and genetic stability of nOPV2. *The Lancet* published findings from [these trials](#) in December 2020.

Does the vaccine look the same as mOPV2?

nOPV2 looks similar to mOPV2. The liquid is similar in colour and the same type of dropper dispensers are used. Differences include the packaging and vaccine vial labelling as well as the size of the vaccine vial: nOPV2 comes in a larger 50-dose vial as opposed to the typical 20-dose vial. The different labelling and packaging design are important to differentiate the two vaccines, although they will not be used together in the field during the initial use period. nOPV2 vials also feature the same type of vaccine vial monitor (VVM) as mOPV2. For more product information, please visit the official listing of nOPV2 on the WHO Prequalification Department's website: <https://extranet.who.int/pgweb/vaccines/polio-vaccine-novel-oral-nopv-monovalent-type-2>.

nOPV2 Rollout

What is the regulatory pathway to use nOPV2 in cVDPV2 outbreak response?

In November 2020, nOPV2 received a recommendation for use under [WHO's Emergency Use Listing \(EUL\) procedure](#). The EUL is a WHO regulatory mechanism that involves careful and rigorous analysis of existing data to enable the early and targeted use of yet-to-be licensed vaccines, diagnostic tests and treatments in response to a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) – which polio has been since 2014. The EUL has been used to enable the rapid availability of multiple products in the past. WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) endorsed accelerated clinical development of nOPV2 and its assessment under EUL in [October 2019](#).

How are country-level regulatory authorities involved?

The EUL recommendation for nOPV2 makes the vaccine available for use in countries affected by cVDPV2. For nOPV2 to be used in-country, the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) or other country-level regulatory authority must provide authorization for the importation and use of the vaccine. To help streamline and facilitate this process, [the WHO Executive Board issued a decision in February 2020](#) encouraging Member States to authorize the expedited importation of nOPV2 on the basis of its EUL recommendation for use. WHO continues to engage its regional regulatory networks and works directly with national regulatory authorities to share information about nOPV2 based on data from clinical studies to date as well as the assessment of nOPV2 by WHO and independent experts.

Which countries will receive the vaccine?

Under EUL, nOPV2 may be used in countries affected by cVDPV2 that have:

- Approved the importation and use of the vaccine through both their National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) or equivalent technical immunization advisory group and the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) or equivalent authority in countries without an NRA
- Prepared to meet the EUL requirements as well as the [criteria for the initial use of nOPV2](#) under the EUL.

How will nOPV2 be administered? Can it be used in routine immunization to boost immunity?

nOPV2 is an oral vaccine. It is administered via two drops, given into the mouth of the child, as with other oral polio vaccines. nOPV2 is only recommended for outbreak response under its Emergency Use Listing and can only be used as part of an outbreak response strategy, like mOPV2. Outbreak response with nOPV2 will be conducted in the same way as outbreak response using mOPV2, and GPEI Standard Operating Procedures for cVDPV2 Outbreak Response have been updated to account for nOPV2 deployment. Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) and bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) will continue to be used in routine immunization.

Will nOPV2 be used alongside other polio vaccines?

While nOPV2 is deployed during the initial use period in countries affected by cVDPV2, it will be the only polio vaccine used for outbreak response. Before using nOPV2, there is a required waiting period of 12 weeks after the last mOPV2 use in an area. This allows countries and the GPEI to correctly attribute any

safety signals or environmental detections to nOPV2 and gather data on nOPV2's effectiveness in stopping outbreaks and preventing cases.

What are the special requirements for the initial uses of nOPV2?

Countries wishing to use nOPV2 must meet [specific requirements for use of the vaccine under the EUL](#). Additionally, countries aiming to use nOPV2 within the first half of 2021 will likely be using the vaccine during its initial use period—the period spanning the first uses of the vaccine, during which enhanced criteria apply. [Initial use criteria](#) have been established by the GPEI and endorsed by the SAGE to ensure ability to conduct close monitoring of the vaccine's performance. Given that cVDPV2 outbreaks disproportionately affect areas with weaker healthcare systems and inaccessible areas, the enhanced monitoring is essential to detect any unanticipated events and respond to these quickly and effectively to minimize risk and impact on broader immunization activities. All of the required activities to prepare to meet the criteria are detailed in the [nOPV2 Vaccine Deployment Readiness Checklist](#) and the additional technical guidance documents featured on the GPEI's nOPV2 web page.

How long will the initial use period last?

It is expected the initial use period will last for a minimum of 15 weeks following the first use of the vaccine. This will allow for sufficient time to observe nOPV2's performance in the field and to collect and rigorously analyse data generated from the vaccine's use. The actual duration of the initial use period will depend on the quantity and quality of data collected. WHO's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS) nOPV2 sub-committee will conduct a final review of data after which SAGE will then decide whether to endorse the end of the period to enable broader rollout of nOPV2. As the vaccine will continue to be used under EUL, countries will still need to meet certain requirements for its use, however, these will not be as comprehensive as those in place during the initial use period.

What kind of monitoring will be required after the initial use period?

After the initial use period concludes, special safety and surveillance monitoring requirements (related to acute flaccid paralysis and environmental surveillance, as well as adverse events following immunization, and adverse events of special interest, known as AEFI and AESI) will remain in place while nOPV2 continues to be used under EUL. These requirements are sometimes referred to as the post-deployment monitoring requirements and will help ensure that nOPV2's performance remains closely monitored in line with EUL standards. WHO's Prequalification Department will carefully examine reports on safety, effectiveness and other relevant data that may impact the validity of the EUL status.

How does a country prepare to meet the requirements for nOPV2 use under the EUL?

All countries using nOPV2 under EUL will need to work with the GPEI to meet the relevant post-deployment monitoring requirements. To help facilitate this process, the GPEI has developed a readiness process for countries to prepare to meet the requirements, as well as instructions for monitoring once the vaccine has been deployed. These are outlined in the [nOPV2 technical guidance document](#), the [nOPV2 Vaccine Deployment Readiness Checklist](#), and the relevant supporting documents, including [Polio Field and Laboratory Surveillance requirements in the context of nOPV2 use](#), the [Global AESI surveillance guide](#), and the [Novel oral polio vaccine type 2 \(nOPV2\) Vaccine-Related Event \(VRE\) Response Plan](#). A full set of nOPV2 supporting materials can be found on the GPEI's [nOPV2 web page](#). The GPEI will work with countries to prepare, and a country's readiness will ultimately be assessed prior to nOPV2 rollout by a multi-disciplinary global and regional GPEI team. Countries should contact their WHO and/or UNICEF regional or country-level offices with any questions or requests related to nOPV2 implementation.

When will nOPV2 stop being used under an EUL recommendation and receive WHO prequalification?

Following a successful initial use period, nOPV2 will continue to be used under EUL and full clinical development of nOPV2 will continue, with the goal of achieving WHO prequalification. It is currently estimated that nOPV2 will achieve prequalification in 2023.

How will nOPV2's effectiveness be gauged?

Outbreak control and case prevention will be the key measures to gauge nOPV2's effectiveness. Genetic stability of the vaccine will be monitored by the Genetic Characterization Subgroup of GPEI's nOPV2

Working Group. While clinical trials already show strong evidence of nOPV2's immunogenicity, additional studies will be conducted after campaign rounds throughout the EUL period to confirm protection against type 2 poliovirus in vaccinated individuals.

Strategy and Finance

How much will nOPV2 cost per dose?

The production of nOPV2 is expected to be similar to production of the existing type 2 oral polio vaccine, which costs US\$ 0.15 per dose. This means that over the long-term, prices for nOPV2 could approach those for mOPV2, once investments in research, facilities and testing have been recouped. Details need to be finalized based on experience from commercial production and release, and scale of use of the vaccine, among other factors.

Who is funding nOPV2 development and production?

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has funded all development and clinical trials of nOPV2 to date, working closely with GPEI partners throughout the process to ensure resources are going toward a tool that could prove critical to helping end all forms of polio. Based on promising data from clinical trials, and the public health emergency that cVDPV2 constitutes, the Foundation has already funded the production of 200 million doses of nOPV2 to enable its rapid deployment in affected countries meeting initial use requirements and requesting the vaccine.

Is nOPV2 the silver bullet to stopping cVDPV2 and getting to eradication?

If nOPV2 proves to be as effective as anticipated at stopping cVDPV2 outbreaks, it would be a significant development for eradication efforts; however, this alone will not achieve a polio-free world. Other core strategic components remain essential, including campaign quality and heightened surveillance in polio-affected and at-risk countries. Finally, it is important to remember that vaccines are only as good as the number of people they reach. To eradicate all forms of polio, and maintain eradication, countries must prioritize maintaining strong disease surveillance and improving immunization campaign quality to ensure all children are reached with polio vaccines.

Is nOPV being developed for other types of poliovirus?

nOPV for types 1 and 3 polioviruses, called nOPV1 and nOPV3, are in preclinical development and the first in-human trials with these vaccines are expected to begin in 2021. If clinical trials with these vaccines prove successful, nOPV1 and nOPV3 could be kept in stockpiles and used in case of future cVDPV1 and cVDPV3 outbreaks respectively. nOPV1 and nOPV3 are not expected to be ready for use under an EUL recommendation until 2024. There is no plan to replace currently used bOPV in routine immunization programmes.

Now that nOPV2 is available, will mOPV2 be retired?

mOPV2 will continue to be used in some countries even though nOPV2 is now available. The use of mOPV2 is dependent on several factors, including the ability of individual countries to authorize the use and import of nOPV2 in a timely manner, evolving poliovirus epidemiology, and the ability of countries to meet the post-deployment requirements under the EUL. The polio programme would likely stop using mOPV2 in outbreak response prior to nOPV2 prequalification if nOPV2 proves successful in outbreak response and to carry a lower risk of cVDPV2 emergence, and if there is sufficient stockpile of the vaccine. [The SAGE has endorsed](#) in principle that nOPV2 becomes the vaccine of choice for cVDPV2 outbreak response after review of the initial use period is completed and all requirements for use are met. This would mean that nOPV2 replaces mOPV2 for cVDPV2 response in all countries where it is feasible to do so. However, mOPV2 supply will remain available for countries until the time when nOPV2 is prequalified and fully licensed.