

Polio: Public Health Emergency of International Concern- update

An update on the polio Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)



The fourteenth meeting of the Emergency Committee (EC) under International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 [1] was convened on 3 August 2017, to review the data on wild poliovirus (WPV) and circulating vaccine derived polioviruses (cVDPV). The EC concluded that the risk of international spread of poliovirus remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and the Temporary Recommendations under IHR (2005) remain current.

Wild polio type 1 (WPV1): infected countries

(Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria)

Steady progress towards elimination was reported; Pakistan has reported only three cases during 2017. Although Nigeria has reported no cases since 2016, there are concerns for the populations of Borno state, where it is likely polioviruses are still circulating. This population is hard to reach because of security risks to polio eradication workers. In Afghanistan, cases have been reported from Kandahar and Helmand Provinces highlighting that the polio vaccination program there also remains inaccessible for some children.

Concern extends to the situation in the Lake Chad basin region where the risk of spread of polio from Nigeria to other countries in the region (including Cameroon, Chad, Niger and the Central African Republic) and internationally, remains high.

Vaccine derived poliovirus (VDPV)

Rarely, where a population is under-immunised, the live virus present in oral polio vaccine can

mutate and spread causing outbreaks (circulating vaccine derived poliovirus cVDPV) [2]. New outbreaks of cVDPV in DR Congo and Syria are of concern and highlight gaps in the polio eradication programme in hard to reach populations of these countries.

The risk of international spread of cVDPV between Syria and bordering countries was highlighted, and the importance of effective vaccination programmes in those countries using Inactivated Polio Vaccine, was stressed.

IHR Temporary Recommendation categories

States infected with WPV1, cVDPV1 or cVDPV3 with the potential risk of international spread:

- Afghanistan
- Nigeria
- Pakistan

These countries have a certificate requirement for polio vaccination under International Health Regulations (IHR). Please refer to Country Information pages.

States infected with cVDPV2, with potential risk of international spread:

- DR Congo*
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Syria*

*There is no certificate requirement under IHR for these countries. Travellers are encouraged to carry proof of polio vaccination.

States no longer infected by WPV1 or cVDPV, but which remain vulnerable to re-infection by WPV or cVDPV:

WPV1

- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Niger

cVDPV

- Guinea
- Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)
- Madagascar
- Myanmar
- Ukraine

In addition to the countries detailed in this report, the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#) highlight the following countries to be no longer polio infected, but at high risk of outbreaks:

Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia and South Sudan. NaTHNaC recommends a booster dose of a polio-containing vaccine for those who have not received a dose within the previous 10 years travelling to these countries.

The polio status of countries is reviewed by WHO on a regular basis and polio vaccination

recommendations are subject to change.

For polio vaccination recommendation for travellers to these countries [see our Country Information pages](#).

Advice for travellers

[Polio](#) is transmitted via the faecal-oral route, either by exposure to water contaminated by infected human faeces, or by person to person contact. You should practise strict [food, water and personal hygiene](#).

Independent of your destination, you should complete a primary vaccination course for polio according to [the UK schedule](#). Travellers are encouraged to carry documentary evidence of their polio vaccination status.

An International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis is required by some countries [see our Country Information pages](#) for country specific information.

Advice for health professionals

All travellers regardless of destination should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters as [recommended in the UK](#). See our [Country Information pages](#) for country specific recommendations and certificate requirements.

For specific outbreak information, check our [Outbreak Surveillance](#). The polio status of countries is reviewed by WHO on a regular basis and polio vaccination recommendations are subject to change.

Resources

- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#)
- [Poliomyelitis factsheet](#)
- [Public Health England: Polio – guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [World Health Organization: Polio](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Statement on the 14th IHR Emergency Committee regarding the international spread of poliovirus \[Accessed 4 September 2017\]](#)
2. [Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Vaccine Derived Polioviruses \[Accessed 4 September 2017\]](#)