

22 Jul 2019

Ghana: updated recommendations for polio vaccination

Circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV) has been detected in an environmental sample during routine surveillance

On 10 July 2019, the Ministry of Health Ghana informed the World Health Organization (WHO) of a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2), detected in an environmental sample. The sample was collected in Tamale Metropolis, Northern Region and the virus identified is genetically linked to the cVDPV2 detected in Kwara State, Nigeria which is currently spreading in Nigeria and neighbouring countries [1].

CVDPV identified in environmental samples (i.e. from sewage, waste water systems) have the potential to spread through a community [2]. Like wild poliovirus, vaccine derived polio viruses have the potential to cause paralysis in unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals [3]. There have been no cases of paralysis associated with the detected environmental sample in Ghana. Nevertheless because of the potential for spread, the Ministry of Health in Ghana has initiated further investigations, risk assessment of the situation and public health response measures [1].

Ghana has a vaccination programme with both inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) and bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) with coverage of over 98% nationwide [4]. Ghana has been polio free since 2000 [5].

When an environmental cVDPV is reported in a country without human cases, NaTHNaC seeks expert advice on polio immunisation coverage and surveillance in the outbreak country. In some cases, polio vaccination recommendation for travellers is revised [6].

As of 19 July 2019, the [recommendation for polio vaccine](#) for UK travellers to Ghana has been updated.

Advice for travellers

Circulating vaccine derived poliovirus (cVDPV) can be transmitted via the faecal-oral route, through exposure to water contaminated by infected human faeces, or by direct person to person contact. You are advised to practise strict food, water and personal hygiene.

Independent of your travel destination, you should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters as [recommended in the UK](#).

If you are travelling to Ghana, you should make sure you have completed a full course of a polio-containing vaccine. Vaccines used in the UK will provide protection against all types of polio. If your last dose of polio vaccine was given 10 or more years ago, you should have a booster dose before travel to Ghana.

Children who are travelling should be up to date with an age appropriate course of polio vaccine.

Other recommendations for polio vaccination apply to certain travellers and are given on the [Ghana Country Information page - vaccine recommendations](#)

For specific outbreak information, check our [Outbreak Surveillance](#) section.

The polio status of countries is reviewed by WHO on a regular basis and polio vaccination recommendations are subject to change. For individual country specific advice, check our [Country Information pages](#).

Further details on the global polio situation can be found on the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#).

Resources

- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\): vaccine derived poliovirus](#)
- [World Health Organization: Polio](#)
- [Poliomyelitis factsheet](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Africa Region. Weekly Bulletin on Outbreaks and Other Emergencies. Week 28:8-14 July 2019.](#) [Accessed 22 July 2019]
2. [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\). Vaccine derived polioviruses.](#) [Accessed 22 July 2019]
3. [World Health Organization. What is vaccine derived polio? On-line Q and A.](#) April 2017 [Accessed 22 July 2019]
4. [World Health Organization. Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals. Data, statistics and graphics.](#) [Accessed 22 July 2019]
5. [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\). Polio-free countries.](#) [Accessed 22 July 2019]
6. [TravelHealthPro. Country Specific Information Rationale.](#) [Accessed 22 July 2019]