

27 Aug 2020

Wild polio eradicated in Africa

Wild polio has been eradicated in Africa; although vaccine-derived polio remains a threat

On 25 August 2020, the independent Africa Regional Certification Commission certified the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region as wild polio-free, after four years without a reported case [1-3].

Since 1996, polio eradication efforts have prevented infection in up to 1.8 million children and saved approximately 180,000 lives [2]. Five of the six WHO regions are free from wild polio virus representing 90% of the world's population [3]. Two countries worldwide: Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to report wild polio transmission [1]. The last case of wild polio in Africa was confirmed in 2016 in Nigeria [2].

Circulating type 2 [vaccine-derived polio](#) (cVDPV2) cases continue to occur, in under-immunised communities in sixteen countries in Africa [2]. These pockets of low immunity mean vaccine-derived polio strains continue to be a threat. This risk is magnified by interruptions in polio vaccination due to COVID-19, which has left communities more vulnerable to cVDPV2 outbreaks [1].

To protect this progress against wild polio and stop the spread of vaccine-derived polio, WHO advise of the need to remain vigilant and keep up polio vaccination rates to avert a resurgence of wild polio and threat of vaccine-derived polio [2].

Advice for travellers

Polio can be transmitted via the faecal-oral route, through exposure to water contaminated by infected human faeces, or by direct person to person contact.

All travellers should practise strict food, water and personal hygiene.

Travellers should also ensure they have completed a primary vaccination course for polio according to the [UK schedule](#). Vaccines used in the UK schedule contain inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) and provide protection against types 1, 2 and 3 polioviruses.

An International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis is required by some countries as proof of polio vaccination.

See our [Country Information](#) for destination-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](#) 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

- [Polio in brief](#)
- [Public Health England: Polio – guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative: Vaccine-derived polio factsheet](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Global polio eradication initiative applauds WHO African region for wild polio-free certification, 25 August 2020. \[Accessed 27 August 2020\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa. Africa eradicates wild poliovirus. 25 August 2020. \[Accessed 27 August 2020\]](#)
3. [Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Africa Kicks Out Wild Polio. 25 August 2020. \[Accessed 27 August 2020\]](#)