

About Polio

Poliomyelitis is a highly infectious disease caused by the poliovirus. Most people infected with polio are asymptomatic and remain unaware of their infection. However, 1 in 200 cases leads to irreversible paralysis, which can gravely affect quality of life.

Vaccination Strategy

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is a major global health partnership that includes the U.S. government, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, Rotary International, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Launched in 1988 after the World Health Assembly passed a resolution to eradicate polio, the GPEI and its partners have helped countries make huge progress in protecting populations from this debilitating disease. As a result, the global incidence of polio has decreased by 99.9%, and an estimated 16 million people are walking today who would have otherwise been paralyzed by the disease.

Now the task remains to tackle polio in its last few strongholds—Afghanistan and Pakistan—and rid the world of the final 0.1% of polio cases. GPEI will continue to work with country governments to strengthen routine immunization systems, strengthen polio case tracking and response systems, and conduct mass immunization campaigns where needed.

Role of Shot@Life

Shot@Life fundraises to support GPEI. Since the launch of the campaign in 2012, Shot@Life has raised enough funding to provide the equivalent of more than 52 million polio vaccines to children in low-income countries. Additionally, Shot@Life's network of trained advocates works to ensure the U.S. government remains an active partner and funder of GPEI.

Sources (Updated 2/2021)

Global Polio Eradication Initiative - polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-prevention/
World Health Organization - who.int/news-room/photo-story/photo-story-detail/10-facts-on-polio-eradication

Key Facts

Polio mainly affects **children under five years of age**.

Polio cases have **decreased by over 99%** since 1988.

Polio **anywhere is a threat everywhere** — as long as a single child remains infected, children in all countries are at risk of contracting the disease.

