

What You Need To Know About Vaccines On World Polio Day And Every Day

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(NAPSI)—In the last 50 years alone, vaccines have saved 154 million lives—six people every minute for five decades. But measles, polio, and cholera outbreaks are on the rise despite being vaccine-preventable, and vaccines still urgently need funding. Measles is one of the most contagious diseases and is often the first indicator of immunization gaps.

About Vaccines

Vaccines are one of the safest and most effective ways to protect people from certain life-threatening diseases.

Unfortunately, COVID interrupted life-saving vaccine campaigns, and now there's a growing resurgence of vaccine-preventable infections, including polio and measles, around the world, including 13 outbreaks of measles cases in the United States.

Pointers on Polio

Consider that old scourge, polio. Efforts to eradicate it have been going on for decades. At its peak in the 1940s and 1950s, it affected between 13,000 and 20,000 people in the United States every year, many of them children. Thousands died, and many others were permanently paralyzed. Then, in 1955 Jonas Salk and in 1961 Albert Sabin developed and deployed vaccines and the number of cases dropped.

In the years following, Rotary International (<https://endpolio.org>) a global humanitarian service organization with more than 1.2 members around the world, initiated the global fight to end polio. Since founding the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, Rotary and its partners have reduced polio cases by more than 99.9% percent worldwide. Partners include

the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Rotary International and its members have donated \$2.7 billion and countless volunteer hours to help immunize 3 billion children and eliminate polio in 122 countries. As a result, in 2023, only seven cases of “wild poliovirus” (two in Pakistan, five in Afghanistan) were found. For the past 30 years, the World Health Organization's Region of the Americas has been declared polio-free.

Rotary members are business, professional, and community leaders who share a commitment to making the world a better place. Rotary and its partners also use a new vaccine, nOPV2, to address variant polio virus outbreaks. Millions of doses have been administered. Rotary has advocated, distributed, and administered vaccines for 45 years.

More About Measles

Once, measles, too, looked like a success story. It was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, thanks to a very high percentage of people receiving the safe and effective measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

However, recent data show that U.S. MMR coverage among kindergartners is below the CDC's 95% coverage target—much lower in some communities—and decreasing.

The CDC reports that measles is so contagious that if one person has it, The CDC reports, up to 9 out of 10 people nearby will become infected if they are not vaccinated. Common complications are ear infections and diarrhea.

Serious complications include pneumonia and encephalitis.

Meanwhile, global measles activity is increasing, meaning there are more chances of an unvaccinated person infected with measles abroad returning to the United States. That's one reason it may be wise to talk to your healthcare provider about the MMR vaccine, especially if you plan to travel.

Concerning Cervical Cancer

Rotary is also involved in preventing this deadly disease—women diagnosed with cervical cancer are almost twice as likely to die of it than of breast cancer. Fortunately, cervical cancer is preventable and treatable.

The human papillomavirus, which is also called HPV and is responsible for more than 90% of cervical cancers, can linger in the body for a long time and eventually cause cancer. Getting vaccinated against HPV helps prevent most cases of cervical and many other cancers by giving the body a safe way to build immune system awareness of certain HPV strains.

To help, the Rotary Foundation has awarded more than \$10.3 million in global grant funding for cervical cancer projects since 2014, and other Rotary projects have tackled this issue outside of global grant funding.

What You Can Do

You can be part of the effort to end polio in four ways:

1. Donate to the End Polio Now Campaign (<https://endpolio.org>).
2. Contact government leaders and encourage them to prioritize financial and political support for polio eradication and vaccination for other conditions.
3. Every year on October 24 participate in World Polio Day to raise awareness of the importance of polio vaccination and to celebrate the parents, professionals, and volunteers who make eradication possible.
4. Join Rotary. Since 1985, Rotary members have helped immunize up to 400 million children against polio a year. As a result, more than 20 million people who would otherwise have been paralyzed are walking, and more than 1.5 million people are alive who would otherwise have died.

Learn More

For further information visit: www.polioeradication.org and www.endpolio.org.