POLIO VACCINE
WHAT YOU NEED TO KN0W

WHAT IS POLIO?

Polio is a disease caused by a virus. It enters a child's (or adult's) body through the mouth. Sometimes it does not cause serious illness. But sometimes it causes *paralysis* (cannot move arm or leg). It can kill people who get it, usually by paralyzing the muscles that help them breathe.

Polio used to be very common in the United States. It paralyzed and killed thousands of people a year before we had a vaccine for it.

WHY GET VACCINATED?

Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) can prevent polio.

History: A 1916 polio epidemic in the United States killed 6,000 people and paralyzed 27,000 more. In the early 1950's there were more than 20,000 cases of polio each year. **Polio vaccination was begun in 1955.** By 1960 the number of cases had dropped to about 3,000. By 1979 there were only about 10. The success of polio vaccination in the U.S. and other countries sparked a world-wide effort to eliminate polio.

Today: The disease is still common in parts of the world. It would only take one case of polio from another country to bring the disease back if we were not protected by vaccine. If the effort to eliminate the disease from the world is successful, some day we will not need polio vaccine. Until then, we need to keep getting our children vaccinated.

WHO SHOULD GET POLIO VACCINE AND WHEN?

IPV is a shot given in the leg or arm, depending on age. Polio vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Children

Most people should get polio vaccine when they are children. Children get 4 doses of IPV, at these ages:

- A dose at 2 months
- A dose at 4 months
- A dose at 6-18 months
- A booster dose at 4-6 years

Adults

Most adults do not need polio vaccine because they were already vaccinated as children. But three groups of adults are at higher risk and *should* consider polio vaccination:

- people traveling to areas of the world where polio is common,
- laboratory workers who might handle polio virus, and
- health care workers treating patients who could have polio.

Adults in these three groups who **have never been vaccinated against polio** should get 3 doses of IPV:

- The first dose at any time.
- The second dose 1 to 2 months later.
- The third dose 6 to 12 months after the second.

- Adults in these three groups who **have had 1 or 2 doses** of polio vaccine in the past should get the remaining 1 or 2 doses. It does not matter how long it has been since the earlier dose(s).

- Adults in these three groups who **have had 3 or more doses** of polio vaccine (either IPV or OPV) in the

past may get a booster dose of IPV.
- Ask your health care provider for more information.

ORAL POLIO VACCINE: NO LONGER RECOMMENDED

- There are two kinds of polio vaccine: **IPV**, which is the shot recommended in the United States today, and a live, oral polio vaccine (**OPV**), which is drops that are swallowed.
- Until recently OPV was recommended for most children in the United States. OPV helped us rid the country of polio, and it is still used in many parts of the world.
- Both vaccines give immunity to polio, but OPV is better at keeping the disease from spreading to other people. However, for a few people (about one in 2.4 million), OPV actually causes polio. Since the risk of getting polio in the United States is now extremely low, experts believe that using oral polio vaccine is no longer worth the slight risk, except in limited circumstances which your doctor can describe. The polio shot (IPV) does not cause polio. **If you or your child will be getting OPV, ask for a copy of the OPV supplemental Vaccine Information Statement.**

SOME PEOPLE SHOULD NOT GET IPV OR SHOULD WAIT.

These people should not get IPV:

- Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to the antibiotics **neomycin, streptomycin or polymyxin B** should not get the polio shot.
- Anyone who has a severe allergic reaction to a polio shot should not get another one.

These people should wait:

- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should usually wait until they recover before getting polio vaccine. People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, *may* be vaccinated.

Ask your caregiver for more information.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS FROM IPV?

- Some people who get IPV get a sore spot where the shot was given. The vaccine used today has never been known to cause any serious problems. Most people do not have any problems at all with it.
- However, a vaccine, like any medicine, could cause serious problems such as a severe allergic reaction. *The risk of a polio shot causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.*

WHAT IF THERE IS A SERIOUS REACTION?

What should I look for?

- Look for any unusual condition, such as a serious allergic reaction, high fever, or unusual behavior.
- If a serious allergic reaction occurred, it would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, weakness, hoarseness or wheezing, a fast heart beat, hives, dizziness, paleness, or swelling of the throat

What should I do?

- **Call** a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your doctor, nurse or health department to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

VAERS does not provide medical advice.

Reporting reactions helps experts learn about possible problems with vaccines.

THE NATIONAL VACCINE INJURY COMPENSATION PROGRAM

- In the rare event that you or your child has a serious reaction to a vaccine, there is a federal program that can help pay for the care of those who have been harmed.
- For details about the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, call **1-800-338-2382** or visit the program's website at **www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation**

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department's immunization program.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)**
  - Visit the National Immunization Program's website at **http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines**

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