



Dear Providers:

In July, a case of paralytic poliomyelitis (polio) was reported in Rockland County, New York. This diagnosis was confirmed by laboratory testing performed by the State Department of Health's Wadsworth Center and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The travel history of the case makes clear that the infection was acquired locally. Since then, there has been considerable evidence of circulating poliovirus. The same strain found in the case has been detected in wastewater collected in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan and Nassau Counties as well as New York City.

As you know, polio is a dangerous and debilitating disease. Paralysis from polio is typically permanent, resulting in life-long disability. Disability is determined by which nerve(s) are damaged. Historically, damage to the phrenic nerve resulted in paralysis of the diaphragm, meaning people – often young children – became dependent on an “iron lung”. Today, a ventilator would replace an iron lung, but the grave threat of polio to un- and under-vaccinated children remains. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), of those paralyzed by polio, 5-10 percent die when their breathing muscles become immobilized. Even children who seem to initially recover from polio can develop new muscle pain, weakness, or paralysis as adults 15 to 40 years later. This is called post-polio syndrome.

**This is an urgent plea: as the most trusted source of medical guidance for your patients and their families, we need your help to make sure that any child who is not vaccinated or up to date with polio immunizations gets all the recommended doses immediately. This is particularly urgent for providers and patients in Rockland, Orange, and Sullivan Counties, where poliovirus has been detected in wastewater repeatedly.**

Your strong, consistent, and specific recommendation to vaccinate against polio is vitally important to protect the health and well-being of children. Research consistently shows that a provider's recommendation is the single most influential factor in a parent's decision to immunize their children. You can provide reassurance in the long-established safety of the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV)—the only vaccine available in the U.S.—which is 99 to 100 percent effective at preventing paralysis among people who get all recommended doses. Pediatric providers should also consider combination vaccines that include polio.

#### **Here's how you can help:**

1. If you are a pediatrician or family physician that cares for patients 17 years of age or younger, check patients' polio vaccination status in the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS). **If a patient needs to be vaccinated or catch-up on doses, contact their parent or guardian to schedule their appointment right away. Consider administering combination vaccines for children.**
2. **If a patient or parent/guardian of a patient calls your office seeking to understand if they or their children are up to date with their polio immunizations, make sure someone is available to help answer their questions and arrange for a vaccine, if needed.** If that information is available to you through NYSIIS, let them know, and schedule an appointment for the necessary doses. If it is not, inform them of the [current State recommendations](#) and what, if anything, they should do based on the information they have and whether they live or work in areas where there has been repeated detection of poliovirus (Rockland, Orange, and Sullivan Counties).
3. **Amplify the importance and safety of polio immunization in any way you can.** This can be through signage in your office, direct phone call or outreach, e-mail or letter communications, social media, local or community-based event participation, or more. As a trusted medical voice, you can help make sure more New Yorkers confidently make the decision to get the protection they and their children need.

4. **If you are not administering IPV (or preferably in a combination vaccine for children, e.g., Pediarix, Pentacel, Vaxelis) make sure your staff knows where to direct patients and parents who need to catch-up with polio vaccinations.** Rockland and Orange County local county health departments are hosting free clinics. If you care for patients outside of these Counties, advise them of a nearby clinic where IPV is available or direct them to their local county health department. All local county health departments have doses available and are able to request more doses if they are needed.

**For more information and resources:**

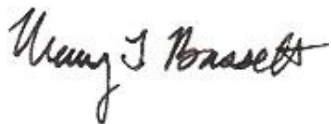
- Readymade free [resources](#), including [posters](#), [pamphlets for parents/guardians](#), [flyers](#), and [information cards are available for immediate download](#). You can order education material at no charge in multiple languages by filling out the order form (PDF) on the following page. If you have questions, you can email [BMCC@health.ny.gov](mailto:BMCC@health.ny.gov).
- A dedicated frequently asked question page about [polio](#) and [polio immunization](#) from NYSDOH. More information from CDC is [here](#).

It's also important for your patients to know that while immunization is the only way to prevent against disease, alcohol-based sanitizers may not work well on some types of germs, like poliovirus, and handwashing with soap and water is important.

One case of paralytic polio is already too many. The New York State Department of Health and CDC are working tirelessly to stop polio from harming New York communities further, but we cannot do this without the support of the providers and medical professionals in our communities. Together, we must urge and drive immunizations — the safe protection against paralytic disease that every child and New Yorker needs.

Thank you for everything that you do to keep our children and families safe.

Sincerely,



Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH  
Commissioner, NYS Department of Health







**POLIO PUBLICATION REQUEST FORM**

The New York State Department of Health offers limited quantities of free educational materials to New York State residents and organizations.

To order, complete this form and submit it by email to:  
bmcc@health.ny.gov

ALL orders must include a street address. Bulk orders will not be delivered to post office boxes.

TITLE/DESCRIPTION	LANGUAGE	PUBLICATION #	QUANTITY			
 <p><b>What You Need to Know About Polio</b> Rack Card</p> <p>PDF for local customization</p>	English	17362	15 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 <input type="checkbox"/>	100 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other
	Haitian Creole	17364	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Spanish	17363	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yiddish	17365	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	English	17388	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17388.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17388.pdf</a>			
	Haitian Creole	17339	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17339.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17339.pdf</a>			
	Spanish	17340	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17340.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17340.pdf</a>			
Yiddish	17341	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17341.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17341.pdf</a>				
 <p><b>What You Need to Know About Polio</b> Flyer</p> <p>PDF for local customization</p>	English	17366	15 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 <input type="checkbox"/>	100 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other
	Haitian Creole	17368	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Spanish	17367	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yiddish	17369	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	English	17358	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17358.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17358.pdf</a>			
	Haitian Creole	17360	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17360.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17360.pdf</a>			
	Spanish	17359	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17359.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17359.pdf</a>			
Yiddish	17361	<a href="http://health.ny.gov/publications/17361.pdf">health.ny.gov/publications/17361.pdf</a>				
 <p><b>Polio is in Your Community</b> Poster</p>	English	17405	15 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 <input type="checkbox"/>	100 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other
	Haitian Creole	17407	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Spanish	17406	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yiddish	17409	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
 <p><b>Protect Your Child Against Polio Now</b> Poster</p>	English	13714	15 <input type="checkbox"/>	25 <input type="checkbox"/>	100 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other
	Chinese	13719	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Farsi	13720	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Haitian Creole	13715	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Spanish	13716	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Yiddish	13718	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**MAILING LABEL**

NAME	DATE
ORGANIZATION (IF APPLICABLE)	
STREET ADDRESS	
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE	