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Polio: Public Health Emergency of International Concern

An update on the polio Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

The thirty-seventh meeting of the Emergency Committee (EC) under International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 was convened on 12 December 2023 to review the data on wild poliovirus (WPV) and circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPV) and progress made towards stopping transmission since the last report (16 August 2023) [1, 2].

The statement from the EC, which provides the background to the emergency and detail on the current situation, is available: [Statement of the thirty-seventh IHR Emergency Committee regarding the international spread of poliovirus](#).

In addition to listing the current polio status of a country and changes to status in their regular review meetings, the Emergency Committee stipulates criteria that must be met in order to assess whether a country is no longer infected by wild poliovirus 1 (WPV1) or circulating vaccine derived poliovirus (cVDPV); a country assessed as 'no longer infected' will be monitored for a further 12 months. These criteria may be varied in some circumstances.

In the 37th EC Statement, countries with a change in polio status since the last EC meeting (which may mean a change to polio vaccination recommendation) are:

- Congo
- Egypt
- Ghana,
- Guinea,
- Mauritania
- Togo
- USA
- United Kingdom (UK)
- Zimbabwe

See polio vaccination recommendations and certificate information on the individual [Country Information](#) pages for those who plan to travel to these countries.

Advice for travellers

You should follow the [latest foreign travel advice](#) for travellers from the United Kingdom.

You can become infected with the [polio virus](#) through contact with the infected human faeces and/or respiratory secretions of an infected person. The virus can also be found in food or water contaminated with infected faeces. You should practise strict [food, water and personal hygiene](#).

Wherever you are travelling to, you should make sure you have completed a primary vaccination course for polio according to the [UK schedule](#).

If you have missed out for any reason, you can have polio vaccination for free on the NHS at any age.

You should get vaccinated even if you have had polio before as the vaccine protects against different types of polio.

The inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) used in the UK provides protection against types 1, 2 and 3 polioviruses. The bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) used in some other countries, does not protect against type 2 poliovirus. You should check with your doctor or nurse that you are protected against all types of polioviruses.

You are encouraged to carry documentary evidence of your polio vaccinations. An International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis is required by some countries. See our [Country Information](#) pages for country-specific information.

Advice for health professionals

All travellers regardless of destination should be up to date with the routine vaccination schedule [recommended in the UK](#). See our [Country Information](#) pages for country-specific recommendations and certificate requirements.

For specific outbreak information, check our [Outbreak Surveillance](#) section. The polio status of countries is reviewed by WHO on a regular basis and polio vaccination recommendations are subject to change.

Resources

- [NaTHNaC Polio vaccination recommendations update](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Vaccine-Derived Polioviruses](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Where we work](#)
- [Poliomyelitis factsheet](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Polio - guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [World Health Organization: Polio](#)

References

- [World Health Organization. Statement on the thirty-seventh meeting IHR emergency committee for polio, 12 December 2023. Published 22 December 2023 \[Accessed 19 January 2024\]](#)
- [World Health Organization. Statement on the thirty-sixth IHR emergency committee, 25 January 2023. Published 25 August 2023 \[Accessed 19 January 2024\]](#)