

The Polio Vaccine: Questions, Answers

Following is the second in a series of five articles dealing with questions and answers regarding the Salk Anti-polio vaccine. The articles were prepared by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and released through the Jackson county chapter.

Q. Can everyone produce antibodies?

A. No, but most people do. Apparently there are some who do not have the power to produce antibodies, and some produce only limited quantities. But relatively few people are in this category.

Q. Are there times when the vaccine should not be used?

A. Yes. It should not be given to anyone who is ill at the time, especially if there is fever, sore throat or gastro-intestinal upset. The vaccine also should not be given to individuals in a household where a case of polio has just been diagnosed, because other members of the family usually carry the virus at this time even though they are not ill. The decision as to using the vaccine rests, of course, with the family physician.

Q. How long does the protection last?

A. There hasn't been enough time since the vaccine was developed to answer this question fully. Youngsters who received the first experimental vaccine in Dr. Salk's research program 2½ years ago still have protective levels of polio antibodies. The decline in amount of antibodies following the third or booster shot of vaccine, however, is so slow that the vaccine's effectiveness is expected to last for many years. Only time and further investigation can give the complete answer.

Q. If the second shot is delayed, will it be effective later on?

A. Yes. According to Dr. Salk, the effect of the first shot is not lost even if the second shot cannot be given for many months afterward. A third or booster shot should be given about seven months after the second injection.

Q. Does the first injection itself prevent against paralytic polio?

A. It gives some protection, but reliable information does not exist as to the effectiveness of only one shot. One injection sets the machinery in motion for antibody protection, reduces a child's chances of developing paralytic polio. Two shots are needed for more adequate protection during the current polio season, and three for long-term protection.

Q. Should people who have had polio be vaccinated?

A. Yes. There are three types of polio virus and a person who has recovered from infection by one type is not necessarily immune to the other two.

Q. Does the vaccine prevent non-paralytic polio?

A. No. But non-paralytic polio does not give an individual a permanent handicap and so is not important as a health problem. Many cases of non-paralytic polio are never diagnosed or reported, being so mild as to be passed off as a cold or the gripe.

Q. Will children in priority age groups be given vaccine

after the NFIP Program is finished?

A. The federal government has set aside \$30,000,000 for the purchase of vaccine for use in states and territories. Under the program that has been set up, vaccine is to be divided among states and territories according to their needs. Each state and territory, however, has the right to determine how the vaccine will be used within its boundaries. Consequently, plans will vary from state to state.



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