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## World Polio Day 2023: Does Polio Cause Nerve Damage? See What Experts Say

The virus enters the body through the mouth and throat and can then spread to the nervous system, where it can cause various degrees of nerve damage.

By: [Utsa Ganguly](#) | Updated at : 22 Oct 2023 10:01 PM (IST)

Does Polio Cause Nerve Damage? See What Experts Say

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World Polio Day 2023: Relation Between Polio And Nerve Damage ( Image Source : Getty )

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Polio is a viral infection caused by the poliovirus, which primarily affects the nervous system. The virus enters the body through the mouth and throat and can then spread to the nervous system, where it can cause various degrees of nerve damage. The severity of nerve damage can vary from person to person. According to Dr Praveen Sharma, who is a Consultant Neurologist, at Apollo Clinic, HSR Layout, "In some cases, polio may cause only mild or no symptoms at all, while in others, it can lead to significant nerve damage, resulting in symptoms such as muscle weakness, paralysis, and even permanent disability."

"This damage occurs because the virus can attack and destroy motor neurons in the spinal cord, which are responsible for controlling muscle movement. Children are affected most frequently. It presents with fever, headache and neck stiffness followed by paralysis," he added.

### How Polio Casues Nerve Damage In Children?

Dr. Gaurav Jawa who is a Senior Consultant- Neonatologist and Paediatrics at Apollo Cradle and Childrens Hospital, Chirag Enclave- New Delhi said, "Polio, short for poliomyelitis, is a viral infection caused by the poliovirus, which primarily affects the nervous system. Children are more prone to polio infection because they are immature but polio is a highly contagious viral infection primarily transmitted through the fecal-oral route, and its effects on the nervous system can be particularly devastating, especially in pediatric cases."

"The poliovirus primarily targets the nervous system, specifically the motor neurons in the spinal cord and brainstem. Motor neurons are responsible for transmitting signals from the brain to muscles, allowing for voluntary muscle movement. When a child becomes infected with polio, the virus enters the bloodstream after initial replication in the gastrointestinal tract," he went on to say.

"Within the central nervous system, the poliovirus attacks and damages motor neurons. This damage disrupts the transmission of signals from the brain to the muscles, leading to muscle weakness and, in severe cases, paralysis. The extent of nerve damage can vary, with some children experiencing mild weakness while others may suffer from complete paralysis," he added.

Additonally, Dr. Gaurav said that in certain instances, the poliovirus can also affect the neurons responsible for controlling vital functions such as breathing, leading to respiratory paralysis. This is a life-threatening complication of polio that requires immediate medical intervention, often involving mechanical ventilation.

Dr Rajeev Santhosh, who is a Consultant & Lead of Neonatology, at Fernandez Hospital concluded by saying, "Polio is a highly contagious viral disease caused by the poliovirus. The primary symptoms of polio often include fever, fatigue, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Although vaccines have been developed to prevent polio, those who contract the virus and develop symptoms may still experience nerve damage. This damage can be permanent, leading to lifelong disabilities. Paralysis occurs in one in 150 infections. Routine immunisation against the virus, supplementary immunisation campaigns known as Pulse Polio rounds, and Immunisation of all children under 5 years of age along with constant surveillance would help us keep this dangerous virus away from causing lifelong damage."

*[Disclaimer: The information provided in the article, including treatment suggestions shared by doctors, is intended for general informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.]*

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