

Polio Treatment Guidelines

Polio, or poliomyelitis, is a highly contagious viral disease that primarily affects children under 5 years old. While polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988 thanks to global vaccination efforts, it remains endemic in a few countries.

While there is no cure for polio, appropriate treatment and supportive care can help manage symptoms, prevent complications, and promote recovery.

Following established treatment guidelines is essential for providing optimal care and preventing further transmission. This handout summarizes key recommendations from trusted health authorities on polio management.

Early diagnosis

- Consider polio in the differential diagnosis for patients presenting with acute flaccid paralysis, especially if unvaccinated.
 - Perform clinical examination, lab tests on throat, stool, or cerebrospinal fluid samples to confirm poliovirus infection.
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Supportive care

- Encourage bed rest, proper hydration, nutrition, and pain management.
 - Provide mechanical ventilation or respiratory support if breathing muscles are affected.
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Physical therapy

- Implement individualized exercise programs to strengthen muscles and improve mobility.
 - Regular physical therapy sessions can prevent muscle atrophy and enhance coordination.
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Pain management

- Use over-the-counter pain relievers like ibuprofen or acetaminophen for muscle pain and discomfort.
- Consider prescription medications or alternative therapies like heat/cold, acupuncture for severe pain.

Braces and orthotics

- Use braces, ankle-foot orthoses (AFOs), or custom devices to stabilize weak limbs and improve mobility
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Vaccination

- Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) is the recommended vaccine in the U.S.
 - Maintain high vaccination rates in the population to prevent transmission
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Follow-up care

- Monitor for complications like post-polio syndrome with long-term follow-up
 - Provide ongoing rehabilitation and assistive devices as needed
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References

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