

28/06/22

Kirsten Watters  
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Dear parent or carer

**Re: Recent detection of the polio virus in sewage in the UK**

You may have read in the news that traces of the polio virus have been detected in sewage samples in London. It is not unusual for this to occur in isolated cases and is usually the result of a person vaccinated overseas with the live oral polio vaccine returning or travelling to the UK, and shedding traces of the virus in their faeces (poo). The reason for the current concern is that the samples show there may have been some spread of polio infection between closely-linked people, for example within a household, in North or East London. **No actual cases of polio or polio-like symptoms have yet been identified.**

**The risk to the general public is low.** The polio virus can be passed from person to person through contact with faeces (poo), saliva or mucus. Most people infected with polio show no symptoms but in rare cases, in people who are not fully vaccinated, it can cause very serious disease including paralysis.

**The best protection against polio is vaccination.** Most of the UK population have been vaccinated in childhood, but in some communities in Camden, coverage of these vital immunisations is low.

**The vaccine given in the UK is not a live vaccine** (the live vaccine was stopped in 2004). It cannot shed traces of virus and cannot cause polio. The vaccine has been given safely in this form to millions of people since 2004.

**Please make sure that your children are up to date with all of their vaccinations.** You can see the whole schedule of childhood vaccinations on the [NHS website](#). The vaccinations that include the polio vaccine are:

- **3 doses to babies:** 3 doses of the [6-in-1 vaccine](#) at age 8, 12 and 16 weeks
- **1 dose at age 3:** 1 dose of the [4-in-1 vaccine](#) (sometimes known as the pre-school booster) at age 3 yrs and 4 mths
- **1 dose to teenagers:** 1 dose of the [3-in-1 vaccine](#) (sometimes known as DTP or the teenage booster) at age 14, usually given in school

**You need to have all of these doses to be fully protected against polio.** You can check children's vaccinations in their red book, or ring your GP practice, and book an appointment at your GP surgery to catch-up on any missed vaccinations.

If your secondary school child has missed a school vaccination, call the Camden School Immunisation Team on 020 3317 5076 and book an appointment at a local clinic.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like to know more about polio, the vaccine or other vaccine-preventable diseases, there is lots of information on the [Vaccine Knowledge Project website](#).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsten Watters', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the signature.

**Kirsten Watters**

**Camden Director of Public Health**