**Polio... it can be eradicated**

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus. It invades the nervous system and can cause paralysis in a matter of hours. It can strike at any age, but affects mainly children under five.

### The beginning
3,000 BC

**Ancient history**
Ancient Egyptian paintings and carvings depict otherwise healthy people with withered limbs and young children walking with canes.

### 19th century
ca. 1900

**1900s**
Small, localized paralytic polio epidemics in Europe and the United States.

**By 1950s**
Outbreaks reach pandemic proportions in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

### The outbreaks
1900–1952

1900s
Jonas Salk develops first vaccine against polio—an injected inactivated polio vaccine (IPV).

1962
Albert Sabin develops a “live” oral polio vaccine (OPV), which becomes the vaccine of choice for most national immunization programs worldwide because it is easy to administer. With OPV, polio is brought under control in industrialized countries.

1954
Launch of national immunization programs using OPV worldwide, which leads to control of the disease in many developing countries.

1956
Polio still exists in 125 countries and paralyzes an estimated 350,000 children every year.

World Health Assembly passes a resolution calling for the global eradication of polio. Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is created.

1980s – onwards

2007
The World Health Organisation declares that polio has been eradicated in the Americas, Europe, and the Western Pacific.

### The vaccine
1954–1970s

### Push for eradication
1980s – onwards

2007
The World Health Organisation declares that polio has been eradicated in the Americas, Europe, and the Western Pacific.

### Today
2010

Polio is now endemic in only four countries: Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

### How does polio spread?

- By person-to-person contact.

### What are the symptoms?

- Almost three-quarters have no symptoms at all.
- Headache
- Stiffness in the neck
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Pain in the limbs
- Paralysis

### Preventing polio

Polio can be prevented through childhood immunization. The oral polio vaccine (OPV), given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life.