



**Orange County**

**ATTENTION**

**STEVEN M. NEUHAUS**  
County Executive

**PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT**

**Dr. Irina Gelman, DPM, MPH, PhDc**  
Commissioner of Health

July 30, 2022

**PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO OB/GYN, URGENT CARE, EMERGENCY ROOM, INFECTIOUS DISEASE, DENTISTS, MAXILLOFACIAL SURGEONS, ENT'S, MEDICAL DIRECTORS, PEDIATRIC, PRIMARY CARE, INTERNAL MEDICINE, FAMILY PRACTICE, LABORATORIES AND AMBULATORY CARE STAFF.**

## **PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT #7**

### **POLIO VIRUS DETECTED IN ORANGE COUNTY WASTEWATER**

New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has advised the Orange County Department of Health (OCDOH) that the polio virus has been identified in wastewater samples taken from June and July in two different locations in Orange County. There have been no confirmed cases of polio identified to date in Orange County, but virus is circulating in the community according to wastewater analysis. Last week, health officials in Rockland County and NYSDOH alerted the public to the first confirmed case of polio infection in the United States since 2013. State officials have advised medical practitioners and healthcare providers to be vigilant for additional cases.

Polio is very contagious, and a person can spread the virus even if they do not have any symptoms. Approximately 72% of polio cases are asymptomatic and about 25% will develop flu-like symptoms such as fever, nausea, headache, and stomach pain. Less than 1% can develop paresthesia, paralysis or meningitis. There is no cure for polio. Additionally, it can take up to 30 days for a person to have symptoms. According to the NYSDOH, those who are vaccinated are considered at lower risk for contracting polio. However, if a person is exposed or is at risk of being exposed should receive a booster of the vaccine. If a patient has not received this vaccination, whether they are a child or an adult, every effort should be made to vaccinate all patients, including contacting all unvaccinated patients to encourage them to get vaccinated as soon as it is medically practicable.

The polio vaccine is on the current list of standard child immunizations, but OCDOH has received information from the Immunization Bureau of NYSDOH regarding the current state of childhood vaccinations in Orange County. As was shared in the May 14, 2022, PHA from OCDOH, the most recent NYSIIS analysis reveals that in Orange County, the rates for all recommended vaccinations for 2-year-olds as of the end of 2021 were calculated to show that only **37.39%** of those children were fully vaccinated. This is a decrease from 40.75% in 2020. The New York State (outside of NYC) percentage is higher, at 62.71% of all 2-year-olds. This low vaccination rate presents a considerable risk to the residents of Orange County. If this rate is not increased, Orange County will see cases of vaccine-preventable illnesses, which now could include polio.

While the case of polio was confirmed in a resident of Rockland County, it is prudent at this time to increase efforts to prevent its spread, especially given the new wastewater monitoring data confirming that polio virus is currently circulating in Orange County. **OCDOH advises all providers to contact patients who are due for the polio vaccine, as well as any other age appropriate immunizations and make appointments to receive those vaccinations as soon as medically practicable.** Following disruptions from COVID-19, continue to encourage families to stay on track for children's routine checkups and vaccinations. On-time vaccination is critical to help provide protection against 14 diseases with recommended childhood vaccinations.

It is of the utmost importance that health care providers prioritize the vaccination of patients in accordance with the age-appropriate vaccination schedule in compliance with New York State law as well as the recommendations of CDC and the Academy of Pediatrics.

The 14 diseases include, and are not limited to:

- Polio
- Measles
- Whooping Cough
- Pneumococcal Disease
- Rotavirus
- Mumps
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria

While most receive this vaccination series in childhood, any person who has not completed their polio vaccine series, or are concerned that they might have been exposed, should be vaccinated as soon as possible. If a person, regardless of age, is at risk of exposure to polio, they should receive a booster.

Please see the attached Health Advisory from the NYSDOH regarding the Rockland County case and additional information. Additional information may be found at:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/poliomyelitis/fact\\_sheet.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/poliomyelitis/fact_sheet.htm) and <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/polio/index.html>

The OCDOH offers vaccines, including the polio vaccine, to uninsured and underinsured Orange County residents at our Children's Immunization clinics at no charge. OCDOH also offers vaccines for adults and individuals who are traveling and in need of specific vaccines for a fee. If you have questions, please call 845-291-2330.

Any providers suspecting polio should immediately contact OCDOH 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 845-291-2330 to expedite testing.