

# SAMHS INFO BULLETIN



Compiled by Corporate Communication

## WORLD POLIO DAY 24 OCTOBER 2012

World Polio Day aims to increase awareness about polio virus and to encourage further actions to reduce it from spreading. The commemoration of the day also highlights the success of global strategies in reducing the spread of the disease.

Polio is a highly infectious disease which targets the nervous system and can cause paralysis.

### **Facts about polio disease:**

- Polio affects children mainly below the age of five, but immune and partially immune adults can still be affected by the disease
- Although the most visible sign of polio is paralysis; only one percent of the effects of the disease is likely to be paralysis
- Polio has no symptoms and can spread widely before paralysis is visible. Those affected by polio are often not aware that they have the disease
- It is passed through person to person contact
- The disease has been eliminated in most countries in the world
- There is no treatment for polio. However, the disease can be prevented through vaccination.

### **Who is at risk**

Polio can strike at any age, but it mainly affects children under five years old.

## **Risk Factors for Paralysis**

No one knows only a small percentage of infections lead to paralysis. Several key risk factors have been identified as increasing the likelihood of paralysis in a person infected with polio. These include:

- Immune deficiency
- Pregnancy
- Removal of the tonsils(tonsillectomy)
- Strenuous exercise
- Injury

## **Treatment and prevention**

There is no cure for polio, only treatment to alleviate the symptoms. Heat and physical therapy is used to stimulate the muscles and antispasmodic drugs are given to relax the muscles. While this can improve mobility it cannot reverse permanent polio paralysis. Polio can be prevented thorough immunization, Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child a child for life.

Approved by: D Med (SAMHS)

