



## POLIO TIMELINE

### 1800s

1800s Paralytic poliomyelitis (polio) takes its toll worldwide, affecting mostly children. The disease is known as infantile paralysis.

1894 First known polio epidemic in the United States occurs in Vermont.

### 1900s

1908 Dr. Karl Landsteiner discovers that the cause of infantile paralysis is a virus.

1916 The first major epidemic of polio documented in the United States strikes, paralyzing young children and horrifying the nation. Increasing numbers of outbreaks occur each year in the U.S.

### 1920s

1921 Franklin D. Roosevelt is diagnosed with polio.

1927 Roosevelt organizes the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation for polio sufferers.

1928 The first iron lung is used to preserve breathing function in patients with acute polio.



### 1930s

1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected President of the United States.

1938 President Roosevelt founds the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP, known today as the March of Dimes).

1938-1958 March of Dimes recruits celebrities to help raise funds and awareness in its efforts to fight polio.

### 1940s

1942 Dr. Jonas Salk arrives at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. Techniques earned there with influenza are used later to develop the polio vaccine.



- 1945 President Roosevelt dies on April 12.
- 1947 Salk is recruited by the University of Pittsburgh to develop a virus research program.
- 1948-49 Scientists from four universities confirm there are only three strains of poliovirus.

**1950s**

- 1952 The worst recorded polio epidemic in United States history occurs, with 57,628 reported cases.
- 1954 Dr. Salk and associates develop a potentially safe injectable vaccine against polio, (IPV) given to nearly 15,000 Pittsburgh-area subjects (most were children) in pilot trials, 1952-1954.
- 1954 Dr. Thomas Francis, Jr., University of Michigan, directs field trials of Salk vaccine sponsored by NFIP. The trials are the largest in U.S. history, involving 1.8 million children, and use the now standard double-blind process for the first time.
- 1954 Nobel Prize in Medicine is awarded to John F. Enders, Thomas H. Weller, and Fredrick C. Robbins for their discovery of the ability of poliomyelitis viruses to grow in tissue cultures.
- 1955 On April 12 at the University of Michigan, Dr. Francis announces field trial results: Salk vaccine is “safe, effective and potent.” Dr. Francis’s Vaccine Evaluation Center becomes the model for future vaccine trials.
- 1955-57 Once vaccine becomes available, incidence of polio in the United States falls by 85-90%.



**1960s**

- 1961 Oral polio vaccine, developed by Dr. Albert Sabin, is licensed for use in the United States.
- 1963 Congress establishes the Immunization Grant Program; polio incidence plummets to only 396 reported cases in the United States.



**1970s**

- 1979 Last U.S. case of polio caused by wild poliovirus.

## 1980s

- 1985 Rotary International establishes its PolioPlus program, which holds two fundraising events. Rotary has contributed over \$500 million to fight polio worldwide.
- 1988 Global Polio Eradication Initiative is launched as global burden of polio impacts 350,000 in 125 countries annually. Spearheading partners include the World Health Organization, Rotary International, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF.

## 1990s

- 1994 The Americas are certified polio-free.
- 1999 The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that the oral vaccine be discontinued in the United States, and a modified IPV becomes the preferred vaccine.

## 2000s

- 2000 The Western Pacific Region is certified polio-free.
- 2002 The European Region is certified polio-free.
- 2002 Rotary International launches a second fundraising campaign to eradicate polio.
- 2005 April 12, 2005 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Salk vaccine. Efforts to eradicate polio worldwide remain necessary, with just over 1,200 cases globally.



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