

Polio History Timeline

1894 - The first major polio epidemic reported in the US occurs in Vermont. 132 total cases reported.

1908 - Polio becomes a reportable disease. Polio virus is identified.

1909 - Massachusetts begins counting polio cases.

1916 - Nine thousand cases reported in New York City.

1921 - Franklin D. Roosevelt contracts polio.

1928 - Iron lung is developed - a large metal tank equipped with a pump that assists respiration.

1932 - FDR is elected president of the United States.

1934 - Major outbreak of polio in Los Angeles - nearly 2500 cases from May - November.

1940 - Sister Elizabeth Kenny travels to the US from Australia to present her unique procedures to treat polio patients.

1943 - The Sister Kenny Foundation is formed, and her procedures become the standard treatment for polio patients.

1945 - WWII ends, and large epidemics of polio in the US occur immediately, with an average of more than 20,000 cases a year from 1945 to 1949.

1947 - Jonas Salk accepts position in new Pittsburgh medical laboratory.

1948 - Salk's laboratory awarded research grant for polio virus typing project.

1954 - Field trials of the Salk vaccine (using killed virus and injected) are sponsored by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

1955 - News of successful vaccine trials announced. Nationwide vaccination program started.

1958 & 1959 - Sabin oral vaccine (using live, weakened virus, and administered orally) proven to be effective and easier to use.

1979 - Last indigenous transmission of wild polio virus occurs in the US. All future cases are vaccine-related or imported.

1988 - The World Health Organization passes resolution to eradicate polio by the year 2000.

1994 - China launches its first National Immunization Days, immunizing 80 million children.

1995 - India follows China's lead and organizes its first National Immunization Days, and more than 87 million children are immunized.

2000 - Wars, natural disasters, and poverty in about 30 Asian and African nations prevent the complete eradication of polio. New target date for worldwide eradication of 2005 is set by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

2001 - 575 million children are vaccinated in 94 countries.

2004 - Ministers of Health from the six remaining polio-endemic countries meet and agree to take final steps toward polio eradication.

