

15. Polio

October 24 is observed as World Polio Day.

Genesis:

World Polio Day was established by **Rotary International** on 24th October to celebrate the birth of **Jonas Salk**, who developed a vaccine against **poliomyelitis**.

Africa has been declared free from wild polio by the independent body, **the Africa Regional Certification Commission**.

- Now **only the vaccine-derived polio virus remains in Africa**.

When a country is certified as free of wild polio?

A region is certified as free of wild polio after three years have passed without the virus being detected in any of its countries.

- **Nigeria** is the last African country to be declared free from wild polio.

Where wild polio is still present?

Wild polio is still present in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

What is Polio?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines polio or poliomyelitis as **"a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children."**

Transmission: The virus is **transmitted by person-to-person**, spread mainly through the **faecal-oral route** or, less frequently, by a **common vehicle (e.g. contaminated water or food)** and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and can cause paralysis.

Initial symptoms of polio include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs. In a small proportion of cases, the disease causes paralysis, which is often permanent. There is no cure for polio, it can only be prevented by immunization."

Immunization is the process whereby a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine. Vaccines stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against subsequent infection or disease.

Full immunisation means that a child receives a cocktail of **eight vaccine doses in the first year of life**.

What is the Pulse Polio Programme?

India **launched the Pulse Polio immunisation programme in 1995**, after **a resolution for a global initiative of polio eradication was adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA)** in 1988.

Coverage:

Children in the age group of 0-5 years are administered polio drops during national and sub-national immunisation rounds (in high-risk areas) every year.

Polio in India:

The WHO on February 24, 2012, removed India from **the list of countries with active endemic wild polio virus transmission**.

Two years later, **the South-East Asia Region of the WHO, of which India is a part, was certified as polio-free**.

Prevention:

To prevent the virus from coming to India, the government has since March 2014 made **the Oral Polio Vaccination (OPV)** mandatory for those travelling between India and polio-affected countries, such as Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Syria and Cameroon.