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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

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## **MDHHS, local partners begin testing wastewater for poliovirus in Oakland County**

*Oakland County Health Division is providing free polio vaccines for residents*

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is collaborating with local partners to begin wastewater testing for poliovirus in Oakland County.

After the detection of a paralytic polio case in New York in 2022, MDHHS began working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify communities where there may be potential risk for polio transmission. This is determined by combining information on low vaccination coverage and history of vaccine preventable disease outbreaks.

“Polio is a debilitating disease that is preventable by safe and effective vaccines,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, MDHHS chief medical executive. “Monitoring for polio in wastewater allows us to participate in leading technology that helps inform of potential risk, while vaccination also keeps our communities safe.”

Since poliovirus can often be shed in stool without an individual experiencing symptoms of illness, wastewater testing can provide valuable information on risk to the public and help determine if testing should be continued or expanded. Wastewater data cannot be used to determine or identify who is infected or how many people or households are affected, but it can enhance understanding of poliovirus risk and help prioritize public health efforts to increase vaccination levels in nearby communities.

Detection of poliovirus in wastewater does not necessarily mean there is risk of disease, therefore widespread wastewater testing for poliovirus is not recommended. Wastewater sampling, laboratory methodologies and confirmatory testing for poliovirus are not the same as for COVID-19 and required new protocols to perform surveillance for poliovirus in wastewater.

Polio, or poliomyelitis, is a debilitating and life-threatening disease caused by the poliovirus. The virus spreads through person-to-person contact and can affect a person’s brain or spinal cord, causing paralysis or even death. There is no cure for polio infection, but it is preventable through safe and effective vaccination for adults and children. CDC recommends all children get vaccinated as part of the routine childhood vaccination schedules. Most adults born and raised in the U.S. were likely vaccinated as

children. Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated adults who [are at increased risk of exposure](#) should complete their polio vaccination series. If you have concerns, ask your health care provider if you might need the polio vaccine.

The Oakland County Health Division is providing free polio vaccines for residents to protect themselves against the disease as the United States is now considered a country with circulating poliovirus. No appointments are necessary to receive a polio vaccine. Individuals should bring a photo ID and insurance card, if applicable. Health Division offices are located at the following addresses:

- North Oakland Health Center, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Building 34 East, Pontiac.
- South Oakland Health Center, 27725 Greenfield Road, Southfield.

Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

Testing wastewater for poliovirus is just one way that public health agencies monitor for the virus. MDHHS works closely with local health departments and health care providers to investigate any illness that could be due to polio and arrange for clinical testing.

Results from wastewater testing for poliovirus will be shared online as they become available. Wastewater samples dating back to March 2023 will be screened for poliovirus. Michigan will continue to test wastewater samples for poliovirus weekly. Sampling is expected to continue for up to six months and if no detections are discovered sampling may be discontinued.

For more information on poliovirus vaccination, [click here](#).

For more information on CDC wastewater testing, [click here](#).

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