

New Zealand launches national polio response framework

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In New Zealand, children are immunised against 13 preventable diseases, including polio



The Ministry of Health in New Zealand has published a new National Poliomyelitis Response Framework, responding to the increased risk of poliovirus globally.

In November 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) advised of an increase in polio activity in areas which have previously seen polio eradicated. This is partly because of global decline in immunisation rates, including in New Zealand.

The National Poliomyelitis Response framework was developed by the Public Health Agency, within the Health Ministry, in collaboration with the National Public Health Service, Environmental Science and Research (ESR) and Ministry of Disabled People. It is one of the several measures recently developed to prepare for a polio outbreak. Others include the introduction of wastewater surveillance testing for poliovirus, and updated guidance for public health services in the polio chapter of Health New Zealand's Communicable Disease Control Manual.

The framework considers four scenarios: detection of poliovirus through wastewater surveillance, detection of poliovirus in an acute flaccid paralysis case (which is essentially rapid weakening of a person's muscles), identification of a contact of known polio case overseas and exposure to poliovirus in a lab facility.

It also includes options for responding to an outbreak or heightened risk including ramping up national and locally targeted immunisation campaigns, particularly in areas of low coverage or high exposure, and increasing testing and subsequent case and contact management.