**Poliomyelitis (Polio)**

**Definition:**

Polio is caused by an enterovirus that lives in the throat and gastrointestinal tract*.*

**Signs and symptoms:**

Most people with polio infection will not experience any symptoms. Some will experience minor symptoms such as fever, fatigue, nausea, headache, flu-like symptoms, stiffness in the back and neck, and pain in the limbs which may resolve. A very small percentage will suffer permanent paralysis of the limbs (usually the legs).

**Transmission:**

Polio is spread person-to-person through contact with either the throat secretions or the stool of an infected person.

**Diagnosis:**

Poliovirus is diagnosed through laboratory testing of a stool, blood, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), or pharyngeal sample.

**Role of the School Nurse:**

**Prevention**

* Most children should be vaccinated for poliovirus prior to attending school
* The importance of polio vaccination should be communicated to children and their parents
* Good hand hygiene and thorough hand washing should be emphasized, particularly after using the toilet
* Disinfectants or bleach along with proper masking and usage of gloves should be used by staff to clean up diarrhea or vomit from a potentially sick child
* Toys and commonly used surfaces or items should be routinely disinfected
* Students or staff planning to travel to certain areas where polio is still circulating should be made aware of the danger of polio infection and be vaccinated prior to travel

**Treatment Recommendations**

* If symptoms are noted, the child should be referred to their provider for evaluation
* There is no specific pharmaceutical treatment, only respiratory support and anti-inflammatory treatment for brain swelling

**Exclusions**

* Exclusion is generally not recommended for ill students as transmission most likely will occur before the illness is confirmed.
* Susceptible contacts may be immunized but quarantine is generally not recommended.

**Reporting Requirements**

* Polio is a reportable disease – immediately report suspected polio-like symptoms to Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821

**Resources:**

* Maine CDC polio website (including fact sheet) <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/vaccine/polio.shtml>
* Federal CDC polio website <http://www.cdc.gov/polio/>