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 common (West and Central Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle East-Afghanistan/Pakistan) should be made aware of the danger of polio infection

**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**
- School exclusions should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with Maine CDC

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

**Resources:**