



## **POLIOMYELITIS AND THE SALK VACCINE**

Poliomyelitis is a virus infection which can cause extensive and severe paralysis or even death. Those who do not die from an attack might become helpless cripples for the rest of their lives.

The only effective safeguard is vaccination, a new development with poliomyelitis, but one that has been in use for many years in preventing other diseases. Smallpox, diphtheria and tetanus are some of the diseases which can be prevented by vaccination. The effectiveness of vaccination in building up bodily resistance to these diseases has been demonstrated in millions of people.

In New South Wales, vaccination against poliomyelitis is being planned on a voluntary basis, first of all with children in the 0-14 age group, because poliomyelitis occurs most frequently in children within this age group. These children can be protected by vaccination *only* with the consent of the parents or guardians. This article is therefore primarily addressed to parents and guardians in order to gain their co-operation in this vaccination campaign and to answer some of the questions which no doubt are uppermost in their minds.

### **Is vaccination against poliomyelitis desirable?**

Yes, undoubtedly yes! In theory the chance of a child suffering a severe attack of poliomyelitis is at present relatively remote. That estimate is based on the fairly low number of cases reported during the past year. That year however, was exceptional, and as the disease appears in epidemics in cycles, we must regard the next few years with anxiety and take precautions now. Vaccination during a widespread epidemic would probably be of little use because it takes time for the vaccine to build up immunity in the body.

### **Is the vaccination effective?**

Yes. Only time will tell just how long protection will last. Extensive laboratory and field tests have indicated that its effectiveness is of a high degree, and the results of the mass vaccination campaigns which have been carried out and are being continued in the U.S.A. and Canada are most encouraging.

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

The most stringent safeguards are observed during production of the vaccine and, after production, the vaccine is subjected to further tests by the makers and by independent authorities. In U.S.A. and Canada, following the adoption of additional safety measures, more than eleven million vaccinations have been given without ill consequences.

### **Is the vaccine effective immediately?**

No. It takes time for the vaccine to act in the body. This time varies with the individual but the vaccine will not stop an attack of poliomyelitis which was incubating when the vaccination took place.

### **What is the vaccination procedure?**

The injection is given intramuscularly in the upper arm and the vaccine itself will not cause any irritation following injection. The first injection is followed by another after four weeks and with a third some months after the second injection. The vaccine is of the consistency of water and consequently very fine needles can be used.

### **How to apply for vaccination**

If you have not already received an application card and wish to make an application on behalf of your child, please inquire at the nearest council chambers.



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