

The Life Cycle of Polio

FINDING A VICTIM

The virus enters the body through contaminated food, dirty fingers or water tainted with sewage.

SETTLING IN

The virus attaches to receptors on the intestinal walls. (Oral polio vaccine attaches to the same ones.) From there it can get into the bloodstream.

THE ATTACK

In 99.5% of cases, the virus causes no symptoms, or mild flulike illness.

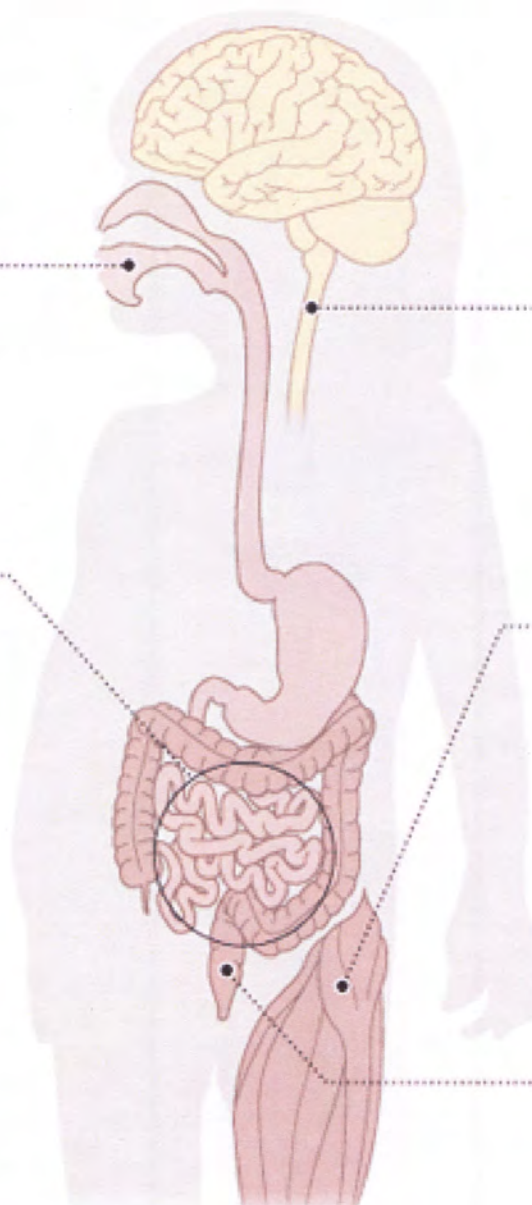
In less than 0.5% of cases, the virus attacks the central nervous system, destroying cells in the spinal cord.

THE DAMAGE

Nerve cell death can cause muscle paralysis, mostly in the legs.

MOVING ON

Even in people with no symptoms, the virus is excreted in feces that can contaminate food and water.



Source: World Health Organization

The New York Times