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Cancer, Simian Virus 40 (SV40), and Polio Vaccine Fact Sheet

- SV40 is a virus found in some species of monkey.
- SV40 was discovered in 1960. Soon afterward, the virus was found in **polio** vaccine.
- More than 98 million Americans received one or more doses of **polio** vaccine from 1955 to 1963 when a proportion of vaccine was contaminated with SV40; it has been estimated that 10–30 million Americans could have received an SV40 contaminated dose of vaccine.
- SV40 virus has been found in certain types of **cancer** in humans, but it has not been determined that SV40 causes these cancers.
- The majority of scientific evidence suggests that SV40-contaminated vaccine did not cause **cancer**; however, some research results are conflicting and more studies are needed.
- Polio** vaccines being used today do not contain SV40. All of the current evidence indicates that **polio** vaccines have been free of SV40 since 1963.

Additional Facts

- In the 1950s, rhesus monkey kidney cells, which contain SV40 if the animal is infected, were used in preparing **polio** vaccines. Because SV40 was not discovered until 1960, no one was aware in the 1950s that **polio** vaccine could be contaminated.
- SV40 was found in the injected form of the **polio** vaccine (IPV), not the kind given by mouth (OPV).
- Not all doses of IPV were contaminated. It has been estimated that 10–30 million people actually received a vaccine that contained SV40.
- Some evidence suggests that receipt of SV40-contaminated **polio** vaccine may increase risk of **cancer**. However, the majority of studies done in the U.S. and Europe which compare persons who received SV40-contaminated **polio** vaccine with those who did not have shown no causal relationship between receipt of SV40-contaminated **polio** vaccine and **cancer**.

More Information

- For in-depth information about SV40, **polio** vaccine, and **cancer**, see our [frequently asked questions](#).
- National Immunization Hotline:
English 1 (800) 232-2522
Spanish 1 (800) 232-0233

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