

Polio circulating in The Gambia, says health minister

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Gambian Health Minister Ahmadou Lamin Samateh warned on Wednesday that polio is circulating in the tiny West African nation, pledging "massive" vaccination campaigns to stamp out the virus.

In a statement, Samateh said that samples taken from sewage in the capital Banjul and the beach-resort area of Kotu had tested positive for poliovirus type 2.

He explained that this means the much-feared virus is circulating in the country of some 2 million people.

Samateh added that the government is planning "at least two massive supplementary vaccination campaigns" to curb the outbreak.

These campaigns will target all children aged under five, he said.

"We implore all parents to cooperate with our vaccinators during the vaccination campaigns to enable us to end this outbreak," the [health minister](#) said.

Polio is an infectious disease caused by a virus that infects the [nervous system](#) and can lead to irreversible paralysis.

It mainly harms young children, but can be prevented with a highly effective and very cheap vaccine.

Last August, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that wild polio virus had been eradicated in all 47 countries in its Africa region, after four years with no new cases and a major vaccination drive among children.

The Gambia, a poor former British colony surrounded by Senegal, had been declared free of polio in 2004.

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