

# Belmonte: Support polio vaccination drive

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At least 500 children in Quezon City were not able to receive oral polio vaccines provided by the local government due to the refusal of their parents.

Mayor Joy Belmonte has asked parents, guardians, community leaders and other stakeholders to support the city's vaccination drive to stop the spread of polio, which reemerged almost two decades after the Philippines was declared polio-free.

"Oral polio vaccines are free. I appeal to everyone to have their children vaccinated. It is our responsibility to protect children and our communities from polio," Belmonte said. Around 160,000 children in the city received oral polio vaccines during the first round of immunization conducted by the city government and the Department of Health last week. According to the city government, some parents refused because their children have already received polio vaccines from private doctors.

Others were worried that their children would suffer from side effects.

Based on information from the World Health Organization (WHO), oral polio vaccine has no common side effects and has been used all over the world to protect children against the disease.

"Over the last 20 years, this vaccine has saved five million people from permanent paralysis by polio," the WHO said.

No case of side effect as a result of the vaccine has been reported in the Philippines so far. The WHO said there is also no risk of overdose, adding that fully immunized children can receive extra doses of the oral polio vaccine to increase their protection from the illness.

"The vaccine is administered multiple times to ensure full protection. There is minimal risk of adverse effects from oral polio vaccine," the health agency said.

The WHO said the oral vaccine may also be given to sick children and newborn babies who have lower levels of immunity.

The Quezon City government said it plans to provide oral polio vaccines to 274,785 children five years and below amid the reemergence of polio in the country.

The second round of vaccination will be held next month.

Belmonte called on families living in subdivisions and condominiums to allow doctors in their vicinities.

"We seek the cooperation of homeowners' associations and building officials to ensure that all children under five years are vaccinated against polio. Please allow our doctors to implement our citywide efforts in private subdivisions and high-rise condominiums," she said.