

Polio True Story—Nazia

Nazia and her brother are twins. Born in Karachi Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center, both children have always been similar, growing up together, playing, laughing and crying together—until the day Nazia was diagnosed with polio.



Nazia and her brother are now two years old, but unlike her brother, Nazia can no longer walk.

While both children were born healthy, neither of them were given routine immunization to protect them against vaccine preventable diseases. The family never took the twins to a medical facility after birth, and the outreach vaccination teams missed their home.

The routine immunization outreach services have recently been improved in this area, with provision of Pushto speaking female vaccinators who can directly speak with the females in the household. Until this time, communicating to ensure that every child is protected against vaccine preventable diseases was difficult. While it is important that polio drops be given to each child every time there is a polio campaign, these drops can only prevent children from polio—for protection against other diseases, routine immunization needs to be completed.

District health authorities map out each and every street in efforts to ensure that no household is missed for routine immunization or during polio campaigns, although during such a huge logistical undertaking, there is always a possibility that the vaccination teams can miss a house. In such circumstances it is vital that the public inform the local health officials through the toll-free telephone number 0800-12012 to ensure that no child is missed. In Nazia's case, the outreach teams for routine immunization did not reach her household, and she was not taken to a health facility—therefore she was not protected against common diseases such as measles. When children are not protected through immunization, it is easier for them to fall ill, and their body cannot fight against viruses entering their system.

Images courtesy Sharp Cut Films

It is a sad fact expresses Tauseeq Haider from Sharp Cut Films, that when Nazia sees her twin brother get up and walk around, she tries to do the same but she can't. Nazia cries as she crawls across the floor, while her brother runs in front, not even looking back at Nazia to see her left behind. How Nazia will have to walk through her journey of life is of a huge concern for her parents.

We all have the power to protect our children through immunization, and immunization is the right of every child. If we immunize all our children under the age of five with polio drops in every campaign, we will never have to see more children like Nazia.



Polio is the only vaccine preventable disease, after smallpox, that can be eradicated, and currently, most of the world is polio-free. There are only four countries in the world that are still polio endemic: Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Nigeria. Pakistan has the chance to be the next polio-free country, but only if all children under five are given polio drops in every campaign—two drops of polio vaccine, every child, every time.

Nazia's story is just one in the series of Polio True Stories produced and directed by Sharpcut Films.