The 1918 Influenza Pandemic wasn’t the only time Louisville faced a major disease epidemic. In 1946 and 1947, a polio outbreak swept Colorado – including Denver and the Boulder area. At the time, polio was often referred to as "infantile paralysis" and for good reason. Children were especially vulnerable to polio. Much like COVID-19 today, the risks associated with polio were not the same for everyone: the danger one faced depended on your age. Worse still, severe cases of polio could lead to lifelong paralysis – think of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt – or even death.

LOCAL REACTIONS

As polio cases rose in 1946, city officials in Louisville employed many of the same strategies we see today:

- Local papers reminded readers to wash their hands thoroughly and to practice good hygiene
- Anyone displaying symptoms was either encouraged to stay in quarantine or rushed to the hospital
- Public gatherings were limited -Louisville canceled its Labor Day parade that year
- Regional theaters stopped showing children’s movies.
- The City of Louisville cut back its youth programs
- Colorado delayed school openings statewide in August of 1946

These reactions were warranted: several Louisville families were still reeling from an outbreak the year before that left six local children stricken with the disease. The precautions also seemed to work, in 1946 not a single Louisville child contracted polio while cases grew in the surrounding towns.

FURTHER READING