

Muscle Weakness?

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PHYSIOTHERAPY
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Polio (Poliomyelitis, known as 'polio', is the viral disease that lead to the partial or full paralysis of individuals in the 1940's and early 1950's.

Although the disease has been eradicated in most countries of the world, the disease has been found to have residual effects which present themselves 15-30 years after the original paralytic attack. This is referred to as **post polio syndrome**.

Individuals with post polio syndrome experience an exacerbation of the weakness and fatigue that



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remained following the onset of polio and/or new muscle weakness, wasting and pain. The cause of this syndrome is unknown. Theories include that the originally damaged motor nerves that stimulate muscles to work, caused normal nerves to send sprouts to the damaged muscles. With time and demand, the undamaged nerves become stressed and start to deteriorate. Other theories include reactivation of the latent (sleeping) polio virus, inactivity, weight gain and the normal effects of aging. Post polio syndrome is not contagious.

Due to the pattern of nerve degeneration and sprouting of new nerve endings symptoms can be slowly progressive with periods of no change then new weakness and a decline in one's ability to carry out activities of daily living and bodily functions such as breathing. A comprehensive examination by a physician trained in neuromuscular diseases is required to rule out other disorders that have similar symptoms.

Once diagnosed with post polio syndrome, daily activities should be paced to avoid fatigue. As well, an

individualized exercise program is needed to work on endurance rather than heavy resistance training, focusing on muscle groups least affected by the polio. A physiotherapist can provide such a program.



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