



Frederick M. Maynard, MD

Ask Dr. Maynard

Send your questions for Dr. Maynard to info@post-polio.org.

See other questions at www.post-polio.org/edu/askdrmay.html.

Question: I am a 68-year-old paralytic polio survivor from the 1955 polio epidemic. I use two leg braces and a variety of assistive devices. My arms were also totally involved but recovered well. My main problem now is increased weakness and pain in my arms as I depend on them more for transfers. My primary care physician recommended using 600 mg. of ibuprofen three times a day to reduce inflammation and alternating ice and heat. A cortisone injection has also been suggested. Is a cortisone injection advisable for people with post-polio syndrome?

Answer: Cortisone injections are safe and often helpful for polio survivors who have developed inflammation problems in shoulder tendons (tendonitis), bursa (bursitis) or joints (arthritis). Their success in eliminating pain depends on an accurate diagnosis of inflammation in a structure and accurate localization of the injection into that structure. Many practitioners now use ultrasound to accurately guide the injection into the desired structure. Cortisone injections will not be helpful for pain in post-polio weakened muscles that are being overused. You may also find it helpful to read one of my previous Q&A's about this subject. www.post-polio.org/edu/pphnews/PPH29-2spr13p4-5.pdf and www.post-polio.org/edu/pphnews/PPH29-2spr13p4-5.pdf.

Note: SOS – Save Our Shoulders: A Guide for Polio Survivors from Moss Rehabilitation Research Institute (www.mossrehab.com/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=67&Itemid) is a 34-page booklet compiled in 2003. It discusses shoulder problems of polio survivors and offers advice and exercise possibilities. The colorful booklet includes diagrams and photos. Also see www.polioplace.org/living-with-polio/living-polio (Scroll down to exercises.)

Question: I'm interested in finding out if polio survivors should or should not take beta blockers. I have atrial fibrillation and the doctors keep trying me on beta blockers and I have trouble taking them. Do they work for atrial fibrillation?

Answer: Some polio survivors can tolerate, and benefit from, taking beta blockers, but many are unable to tolerate them because of severe weakness and fatigue. If you are one of those with significant side effects, you should not take them. There are other drugs that can be used for your heart condition. Beta blockers are not essential for the successful management of atrial fibrillation. I would suggest seeking a second opinion from a cardiologist if your current doctor insists you take them.

Question: My husband had polio at age 8. He is now 71. His left leg has started giving out on him and he falls. He goes to a special trainer, but I'm afraid the trainer doesn't know how to treat this. What type of exercises should benefit him, and what should he avoid?

Answer: Your husband's leg weakness is most likely a result of post-polio syndrome. If his knee extensor muscle (quadriceps) has weakened to the point that he is falling, I would recommend he be evaluated by a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician before he continues on with his trainer. The question to be evaluated is: How intense and frequent should he be exercising the weakening muscles? See links at left. Your husband should share these with his trainer, and until he is evaluated by a knowledgeable post-polio physician he should limit exercise on his weakening leg muscles to only non-fatiguing and low resistance types of exercise. ■

Here are links to PHI's statement on Exercise for Polio Survivors Health (www.post-polio.org/edu/pphnews/pph19-2a.html), written by the Medical Advisory Committee of Post-Polio Health International and endorsed by 29 post-polio experts, and Articles about Exercise for Polio Survivors, collected from past issues of *Post-Polio Health* (www.post-polio.org/edu/pphnews/BrochExercise.pdf).