



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 82 years old and have PPS. Two years ago I fell backward down the stairs and broke my C2 and C3 vertebrae. I still can't turn my neck enough to drive myself. I get worn out doing nothing, and I am tired all the time. I had two chair lifts installed, which does help, and I can walk with a walker, so I am able to get to church. Do you have any suggestions for me?*

A: I am glad that you are still on your feet with a walker at age 82 after neck fractures. The only way to regain further strength and endurance for activity is through exercise. It would be best to do this under the professional guidance and supervision of a physical therapist, probably three times a week. You will need a physician referral and obviously their permission to exercise.

Any progress is always slow in polio survivors, and especially will be at age 82. You likely were forced to be less active for several months after the fractures which led to disuse atrophy of your post-polio muscles and deconditioning of your cardio-pulmonary systems, both of which happen more quickly and to a greater degree in polio survivors. Try to muster up your determination and perseverance in order to stick with a vigorous (for you) program for at least three months minimally before thinking your activity capacity is the best it can be.

Continuing a therapeutic strengthening and endurance training program even longer may be appropriate and can be done through many community-based facilities such as senior centers, YMCA's, health and fitness clubs, etc. The challenges are accessibility, affordability and staff and equipment appropriate for senior citizens with chronic limitations (post-polio weakness and fused neck and possibly others). I hope these thoughts are helpful.

Question: *I had what was termed a "mild" case of polio in 1951 at age 7. Other than a barely noticeable curvature of the spine and temporary weakness in the neck, I had no ill effects and was back in full action within a couple months. I played sports throughout high school and have run a variety of races since my early 30s, including marathons and, yesterday, at age 71, I completed a nine-mile race.*

A friend made me aware of PPS in 1985. Reviewing the literature, I saw that avoiding strenuous exercise was recommended, but I have continued to run on and off through the years without apparent PPS issues or serious structural problems.

I do have questions about two conditions. One is Restless Leg Syndrome, which I've experienced on and off since about the time I had polio, and I wonder if polio survivors are especially prone to it.

My other concern is with random "muscle tears" in my lower and upper legs, which I have experienced since my early 40s during times when I am running frequently. Curiously, the tears don't happen when I am in the act of running, but more likely when I am rambling through the house. I have worked with a sports physical therapist who does not believe I have PPS. Do you see any relationship between these two conditions and polio or post-polio? Thank you for your ongoing commitment to helping polio survivors. It is remarkable and deeply appreciated.





A: Congratulations on remaining in such good physical shape at age 71 – my age! I am impressed that you have pursued many good strategies to get help with your concerns. Here are my thoughts about the two issues you raise.

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) remains a poorly understood condition and probably represents a spectrum or variety of conditions in regard to etiology or cause. A number of studies on polio survivors suggests that RLS is more common and particularly in relation to sleep apnea syndromes. I would also say that strenuous use and possible “overuse” does lead to muscle aches and restlessness in anyone. If you have experienced some of these symptoms ever since your childhood polio, then it makes sense that you would experience it more during periods of long distance running. If it does not persist when you are not running a lot and your overall leg muscle strength has not declined over the years more than expected with aging (hard to judge but certainly modest), then I would not be concerned about your polio history in relationship to these RLS symptoms.

Regarding your “muscle tear” symptoms, I think stretching exercises are probably the best strategy to manage them. Again, they probably relate to your strenuous use of the muscles which is normally followed by microscopic muscle-damage changes and make muscles more vulnerable to minor injuries during unplanned non-focused normal-activity related contractions. I would say that if you have had these for a long time, the soreness subsides/ resolves fairly quickly and your overall leg strength has been maintained, I would not be particularly concerned about the relationship of these symptoms to your polio history.

Overall, I would agree that you do not have PPS. I think it is fine for you to remain involved in running as you like and enjoy it and to continue to vigilantly monitor your symptoms and their intensity vis-a-vis the intensity and duration of the strenuous running-related use of your leg muscles. Clearly these activities continue to keep you happy and healthy. ■

Correction *Post-Polio Health*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Summer 2015, Page 3: Montreal was inadvertently left off the list of cities in Canada where there is a center involved in the Multicenter, Multi-country study of the Efficacy and Safety of Immune Globulin Intravenous (Human) Flebogamma® 5% DIF in Patients with Post-Polio Syndrome.

Not yet a Member?

Join PHI for just \$30 a year (Subscriber Membership) and receive your own copy of *Post-Polio Health* four times a year (February, May, August, November), plus eight *PHI Membership Memos* via email. For \$55 (Subscriber Plus Membership), join PHI and IVUN and also receive *Ventilator-Assisted Living* via email six times a year (February, April, June, August, October, December) and six *IVUN Membership Memos*.

You can join online at <http://shop.post-polio.org> or send (or fax, 314-534-5070) this form to: Post-Polio Health International, 4207 Lindell Blvd, #110, Saint Louis, MO 63108-2930 USA. Questions? 314-534-0475 .

\$30 Subscriber

Post-Polio Health (quarterly)

\$55 Subscriber Plus

Both *Post-Polio Health* (quarterly) AND *Ventilator-Assisted Living* (bi-monthly)

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Province _____

Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

email _____

Phone (include area/country code) _____

I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ made payable to “Post-Polio Health International.” (USD only)

Please charge \$ _____ to this credit card:

VISA MasterCard Discover

Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____