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**Question:** *Is there a definitive medical position if polio survivors should take the flu vaccine each year? Last year when I went to get the vaccine, the staff notified me that Guillain-Barré syndrome is one of the risk factors of the vaccine. Should one not take the vaccine if you have a history of paralysis?*

**A:** My opinion is that there is no evidence to say that having a history of paralysis (residual muscle weakness) after poliovirus infection would raise your risk of new paralysis or other complications after flu vaccinations. Recently the question of risks to polio survivors from taking the new ‘shingles virus’ vaccine was raised among the PHI Medical Advisory committee members. The unanimous consensus was there was no known reason to anticipate increased risk for polio survivors.

**Question:** *I have concerns regarding the H1N1 vaccine. Are polio survivors considered an at-risk group?*

**A:** Based on my reading of current public health updates, people who had polio earlier in life are NOT considered ‘high-risk’ for developing H1N1 flu. I suggest that you consider receiving the vaccine when it is available to the general public, if you are a polio survivor with significant respiratory compromise (reduced pulmonary function), or if your general health is poor from heart or kidney problems, or if you will be around many young children as a child care worker or health care professional.

I recommend that you consult your family physician who knows your complete health history, and after doing a little homework of your own, make the decision in consultation with him/her.

**PHI recommends the following sites.**

*This list was sent via email to all PHI Members who have an email in our records. If you are a Member and did not receive it, please send your email address to [info@post-polio.org](mailto:info@post-polio.org) and set your computer to receive emails from [info@post-polio.org](mailto:info@post-polio.org), so they don't end up in spam.*

- One-stop access to US Government H1N1, avian and pandemic flu information ([www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov))
- 2009-2010 Seasonal Influenza Vaccines from the US Food & Drug Administration ([www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm100139.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm100139.htm))
- CDC: Influenza (Flu) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ([www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu))
- The Lancet's H1N1 Resource Centre from collaborative effort by the editors of over 40 Elsevier-published journals ([www.thelancet.com/H1N1-flu](http://www.thelancet.com/H1N1-flu))
- Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 from the World Health Organization ([www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/))
- Stopping the Spread of Germs at Home, Work & School from the CDC ([www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm))
- INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ABOUT H1N1 VIRUS from long-time disability activist and educator Lex Frieden with contributions by Kim Dunn, MD, and Gerard Francisco, MD (The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, USA). ([www.post-polio.org/H1N1BulletinLF0809.pdf](http://www.post-polio.org/H1N1BulletinLF0809.pdf))
- *It's Flu Season* by Judith R. Fischer, published in *Ventilator-Assisted Living* (Vol. 23, No. 3) is online at [www.ventusers.org](http://www.ventusers.org) ▲

