

UNDERSTANDING P P S

POST-POLIO SYNDROME (PPS) IS A CONDITION THAT EFFECTS POLIO SURVIVORS YEARS AFTER THEY'VE RECOVERED FROM THEIR INITIAL BOUT WITH THE DISEASE. AN INTERVAL OF 30 TO 40 YEARS USUALLY ELAPSES BEFORE THE FIRST PPS SYMPTOMS OCCUR. SOMETIMES SOME REHABILITATION MAY RESTORE INDIVIDUALS WITH POST-POLIO TO SOME REGULAR LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING; AND IT MAY ALSO REQUIRE THAT THEY RETURN TO OR BEGIN USING BRACES, CRUTCHES, CANES, WHEELCHAIRS, SCOOTERS AND A VARIETY OF ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT. WEAKNESS IS THE GENERAL SYMPTOM OF POST-POLIO SYNDROME. MUSCLE STRENGTH DECREASES WHEN THE NERVE SUPPLY TO THE MUSCLE IS REDUCED. SYMPTOMS CAN APPEAR IN THE MUSCLES THAT WERE AFFECTED AT THE TIME POLIO WAS CONTACTED OR IN PREVIOUSLY UNAFFECTED AREAS. **MOST NEW PAIN PROBLEMS IN POLIO SURVIVORS RESULT FROM REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURIES TO WEAKENED MUSCLE FIBERS AND MUSCULAR TISSUES.** POST-POLIO SYNDROME IS NOT A RECURRENCE OF THE VIRUS. THE REST THAT IS NECESSARY TO RESOLVE PAIN AND INFLAMMATION OFTEN LEADS TO FURTHER WEAKNESS AND ATROPHY. THUS, A VICIOUS CYCLE OF INCREASING WEAKNESS, INCREASING PAIN AND INCREASING DISABILITY CAN RESULT. **THIS HAS BEEN MY PROBLEM FOR OVER 20 YEARS.** SHRINKING OF MUSCLE SIZE AND DECREASING STRENGTH OCCURS VERY SLOWLY, AT A RATE OF 1 PERCENT OF MUSCLE STRENGTH PER YEAR. INDIVIDUALS WITH POST-POLIO HAVE MUCH LESS MUSCLE RESERVE AND NEED MORE TIME TO RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITY AFTER SURGERY OR SEVERE ILLNESS. MEDICAL PROBLEMS UNRELATED TO POLIO MAY CAUSE PROGRESSION OF POST-POLIO WEAKNESS AND LEAD TO NEW SYMPTOMS. MANY ADDITIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO LATE MUSCLE DETERIORATION SUCH AS NORMAL AGE RELATED LOSS OF MOTOR NERVE CELLS, HEALTH PROBLEMS LIKE A HEART CONDITION, ARTHRITIS, PAIN IN THE SPINE, LOWER BACK AND UPPER LIMBS, AND NEW MUSCLE WEAKNESS, BOTH IN THOSE MUSCLES ORIGINALLY AFFECTED AND THOSE UNAFFECTED, ALONG WITH RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS/BREATHING DIFFICULTIES. **I HAVE THEM ALL.** POLIO SURVIVORS SHOULD EXERCISE ON A REGULAR BASIS, INCLUDING FLEXIBILITY, STRENGTHENING AND CONDITIONING EXERCISES. WARM-WATER POOLS ARE ESPECIALLY HELPFUL. SEVERELY AFFECTED POLIO SURVIVORS SHOULD USE WHEELCHAIRS OR SCOOTERS, ALWAYS! PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW DISABILITIES IS AN IMPORTANT & REAL PROBLEM FOR POLIO SURVIVORS WITH P P S. DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY BECOME THE SECONDARY EFFECTS.