

**Polio Perspective**

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**Post-Polio Protein Power: Eat Well, Be Well**

**Dr. Richard L. Bruno**

"Breakfast? Sorry, don't have the time. In the morning there's too much to do, like showering and dressing and getting to work. I grab a cup of coffee (or two or three) and maybe a donut at work..." "Lunch? Don't think so. I'm still catching up from my late start in morning. I grab a cup of coffee (or two or three) and maybe wolf down half a Big Mac..." "Dinner? I'm either too tired or hungry as Patton's Third Army. I either defrost a piece of pizza and drag myself into bed or eat everything that isn't nailed down!"

"So why am I totally exhausted but can't stop gaining weight?" Americans are not very good at taking care of themselves. American's with disabilities are no better, and maybe a little worse, at self-care because it takes so much time to do things non-disabled folk do in a flash, like showering and dressing. There's hardly any time or energy left for planning meals, shopping, cooking ... or even eating. However, people with disabilities pay a higher price for lack of self-care than do people without disabilities. For those who use wheelchairs good eating habits and proper nutrition are essential, not only for general good health, but also to prevent bowel and urinary problems, to prevent weight gain, and to maintain a decent level of energy.

Polio Survivors vs. Breakfast.

One group of people with disabilities shows the consequences of poor eating habits: North America's 1.8 million polio survivors. Nearly 76 percent of polio survivors

experience Post-Polio Sequelae (PPS), the often disabling symptoms -- fatigue, muscle weakness, joint and muscle pain, cold intolerance, and difficulty sleeping swallowing, breathing -- that occur about 40 years after their original bout with polio. PPS requires polio survivors to use new assistive devices or aids they discarded years ago, like braces, canes, crutches, wheelchairs and scooters, to slow down and to rest during the day. The problem is, polio survivors are Type A, hard working, pressured, perfectionist super-achievers who have pushed themselves beyond their physical limits and allow no time for self-indulgent luxuries -- like food.

Polio survivors don't want to slow down or rest, not only because they're afraid if they are less Type A people won't like them, but also because they are afraid of gaining weight if they become more sedentary. But they shouldn't be afraid. Food is good! Eating properly doesn't lead to becoming fat, it actually reduces PPS symptoms.

Dr. Susan Creange at the Post-Polio Institute discovered that polio survivors with blood sugar levels in the low normal range have as much difficulty paying attention and concentrating as would diabetics with blood sugars as low as if they had taken too much insulin.

"Polio survivors' 'Type A diet' -- three cups of coffee for breakfast, skipping lunch and eating pizza for dinner -- is actually starving their nervous systems' and causing PPS symptoms," says Creange. The relationship between diet and PPS was seen in the 1998 National Post-Polio Survey: the less protein polio survivors had at breakfast the more severe were their daily weakness and fatigue.

Why do polio survivors function as if they have low blood sugar and report more symptoms when they don't eat protein at breakfast? Because polio survivors are running their nervous systems on "half a tank of gas." About 50 percent of all brain stem and motor neurons were killed decades ago by the polio virus. What's worse, the metabolic apparatus, the internal power plant, of the neurons that survived the original polio virus infection was severely damaged. So polio survivors have been running their full-tilt, Type A lives on half the normal number of neurons, neurons that are less able to use their only source of fuel, blood sugar. Dr. Creange found that even normal levels of blood sugar were not enough to fuel the remaining polio virus-damaged, metabolically impaired neurons. And that's where protein at breakfast comes in.

Protein: The fuel that keeps on giving. Protein provides a long lasting, "slow-release" supply of blood sugar throughout the day. Polio survivors who had protein for breakfast reported less PPS symptoms because their fuel tank stayed full longer. They didn't need to "fill up" throughout the day with short-lasting sugar fixes, like soda or candy bars. When we ask our post-polio patients to eat protein every day at breakfast, and have small, non-carbohydrate snacks throughout the day, they report an almost immediate reduction in nearly all the symptoms of PPS, especially fatigue. But "protein power" diet is neither a fad nor a miracle: it's just common sense. No engine can be expected to run without gas. And having protein at breakfast isn't good only for polio survivors.

Mom was right: breakfast is the most important meal of the day for everyone, but especially for people with damaged or compromised nervous systems. Folk with MS (for whom low energy and fatigue can be disabling) those with ALS and Guillian-Barre Syndrome need to feed their damaged neurons first thing in the morning. Those with spinal cord injuries, CP and spina bifida, who use more energy just getting showered and dressed than does a nondisabled person who runs a mile, also need protein early and often. It's a good idea to eat breakfast before showering to "break your fast" and fill your tank before your neurons need the fuel.

Our patients worry that using a wheelchair, resting more and having breakfast will cause them to get fat and have more PPS symptoms. A four year follow-up study found that U.S. and Swedish polio survivors, living their typical "use it or loose it" lifestyles without using new assistive devices or resting, lost equal amounts of leg muscle strength, about 2 percent per year. However, when subjects from the two countries were looked at separately, the Swedes gained only 6 ounces per year, while the Americans gained over 2 pounds; that's 220 percent more weight!

Although weight gain alone is not responsible for the progression of muscle weakness in polio survivors, it is Americans' high fat, Big Mac diet that causes them to get fat. You can fuel your neurons, feel stronger and less fatigued without gaining weight, if you choose low fat, low cholesterol sources of protein. In fact many of our patients, even as they slow down, sit down more, and use a scooter, lose weight (about a pound per week) if they eat more protein, reduce portion size and limit carbohydrates.

We aren't recommending one of those "all protein, no carbohydrate" diets. We aren't recommending a "diet" at all, but a method for eating healthy every day. We suggest 16 grams of protein at breakfast; that's about 1/4 of the daily protein requirement (70 grams) for a 150-pound person. (Always check with your doctor, especially if you have kidney problems, before changing your diet and ask to have your cholesterol measured at your yearly check up.) Look at the list protein-rich foods and select different breakfasts so you can have a variety throughout the week. Remember, you want foods that have more grams of protein than they do fat. Eat well and be well

#### PROTEIN-RICH FOODS:

You need 16 grams of low-fat protein at breakfast. Note: measures in grams.

Great: Protein Fat

Cottage Cheese (lite, 1 cup) 28.0 2.3

Salmon (3 ounces) 17.0 5.4

Yogurt (8 ounces) 12.0 4.0

Tofu 10.0 5.9

2% Milk (1 cup) 8.0 3.0

2 Egg Whites 6.8 0

Bagel 6.0 1.4

Egg Beaters (1/4 cup) 5.0 0

Higher Fat:

Swiss Cheese (1 ounce) 8.1 7.8  
Slim Fast "Meal On-The-Go" 8.0 5.0  
Lite 'n' Lively Cheese (1 ounce) 6.4 4.3  
Hard Boiled Egg 6.1 5.6  
Cream Cheese (Lite, 1 ounce) 2.9 4.7

Lower Protein:

Quaker Life 5.2 1.8  
English Muffin 4.5 1.1  
Oatmeal (1 package) 4.4 1.7  
Cheerios (1 1/2 cups = 1 oz) 4.3 1.8  
Shredded Wheat (1 ounces) 3.1 0.6  
Total (1 cup) 2.8 0.6

Not Great:

Bacon (3 strips) 5.8 9.4  
Egg McMuffin 17.0 32.0!  
Peanut Butter (1 Tbs) 4.6 8.2  
Coffee? 0.1! 0

**PROTEIN POWER BREAKFASTS:**

12 minute breakfast:

2 hard boiled eggs (12 g) and an English Muffin (4.5 g)

8 minute breakfast:

3 scrambled egg whites (10 g) and a bagel (6 g)

6 minute breakfast:

Toasted bagel (6 g), lite cream cheese (3 g) and 1 glass 2% milk (8 g)

4 minute breakfast:

Yogurt (12 g) and 1 ounces of low-fat cheese (6 g)

2 minute breakfast:

1/2 cup low-fat cottage cheese (14 g)

## **Do You Really Need a Statin to Lower Cholesterol?**

By

Gina Shaw

Your doctor says to take a statin to lower your cholesterol. You're not convinced. Maybe you don't think your cholesterol levels are that bad. Or, that you can try harder to eat right and exercise. Perhaps you just don't want to take another medicine every day. High cholesterol levels have a direct impact on your risk of heart attack and stroke, so you don't want to make a hasty decision. Make sure your concerns are valid before you reject a statin -- their benefits to your heart are noteworthy.

**Can Exercise and Diet Lower Your Cholesterol Enough?**

There's no doubt that a healthy lifestyle helps lower cholesterol. The question is whether it can lower your levels enough – and that depends on how high your levels are and what your doctor has set as your goal.

- Eating a heart-healthy diet can lower LDL cholesterol at least 10%.
- If you lose 5% to 10% of your body weight, you can cut LDL cholesterol 15%, and reduce triglycerides 20%.
- If you exercise at a moderate intensity -- meaning you have enough breath to talk but not sing -- for at least 2 ½ hours a week, you can further cut triglycerides 20% to 30%. (Exercise can also increase your HDL, the “good” cholesterol.)

That's a great start, says Michael Miller, MD, director of the Center for Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center. "Lifestyle changes certainly are the cornerstone of cholesterol reduction."

To get your cholesterol down to the level your doctor recommends, though, you may still need a statin. These powerful cholesterol-lowering medicines include Lipitor (atorvastatin), Pravachol (pravastatin), and Zocor (simvastatin), among others.

### **What a Statin Can Do**

"Statin are very simple: You take them once a day, and their effects are quite profound," says Patrick McBride, MD, MPH, director of the cholesterol clinic at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

- Statins quickly reduce LDL, the "bad," cholesterol by 50% or more.
- Statins boost HDL, the "good" cholesterol, by up to 15%.

You should see major changes in your cholesterol levels within two to four weeks after starting treatment.

When you take a statin, you do more than improve your cholesterol levels. They also reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, and other heart problems. “[Statins] are one of the great success stories of modern medicine,” McBride says.

So does taking a statin mean you can sit on the couch and eat bacon all day? Of course not. Doctors say the best way to protect your heart is to make healthy lifestyle changes while taking a statin.

### **Potential Side Effects**

Like any medicine, statins can interact with other medicines you take, and they can have side effects:

- **More common:**Headache, GI problems, muscle and joint aches, or rash
- **Less common:**Memory loss, mental confusion, high blood sugar, and type 2 diabetes
- **Very rarely:**Muscle or liver damage

Research shows that some people with muscle aches from statins feel better when they take extra CoQ10, a substance your body makes to help cells produce energy. Don't take CoQ10 supplements on your own, however. Work with your doctor when you take any supplement.

Overall, the risks of taking statins are very low -- lower than the risks from taking two aspirin a day, McBride says. "The benefits are well-established, with hundreds of thousands of people studied in clinical trials."

## Other Options

Some people take supplements along with statins, or -- if their cholesterol isn't too high -- instead of them. There's good evidence that some supplements can help with cholesterol levels.

- Fish oil can lower triglycerides by up to 50% and improve HDL levels, the “good” cholesterol. People in most studies showing a benefit have taken 1 to 4 grams of fish oil a day. While usually well-tolerated, fish oil supplements can cause a fishy aftertaste, heartburn, or upset stomach.
- Sterols and stanols are available in supplements and are also added to foods such as some margarines, orange juice, or yogurt. These can lower LDL, the “bad” cholesterol, by up to 15%. Cholesterol experts recommend 2 grams per day.

Soluble fiber -- available in supplements such as psyllium as well as in food -- can lower LDL cholesterol. For every 5 to 10 grams that you add to your diet, you can lower your levels by up to 5%. Try to get at least 25 to 30 grams of total fiber a day. Most fruits, vegetables, and oats have both soluble and insoluble fiber.

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

If you're not sure why your doctor prescribed statins to lower your cholesterol, ask at your next appointment.

- Why do you think I need a statin?
- What will it do for me?
- Based on my specific health, what might I gain from taking one and what are my risks?
- Could a statin interact with any medicines or supplements I'm taking?
- When will I know if this drug is working?
- Can I take a supplement instead of -- or along with -- a statin to lower my cholesterol?
- What supplements or treatments will ease side effects?

Miller tells his patients to look at statins like a daily vitamin to boost health. "In many ways, that's what it is," he says, "and it's the only one that we know that works so well to improve cholesterol and lower cardiovascular risk."

THE END IS NEAR

By

Millie Malone Lill

The end of 2012, I mean. Oh, did you think I was talking about that Mayan thing? No, I am sure they were wrong. If you are reading this, they definitely were wrong! I read somewhere that the Mayans did not figure in leap years, so if that is true we are already well past December 21, 2012.

This has been a good year for me. I started doing an online monthly polio newsletter for [postpoliobrandsong.org](http://postpoliobrandsong.org) and am enjoying that a lot as well as my bi-monthly column for Gleanings. Combined with a poem every month for my poetry group, this keeps me busy and out of trouble. Mostly. My family has also gained its first girl born into our family in 25 years. Kolbie Lou Kalani Malone, welcome to the mayhem that is our

family.

There is so much information online about post polio and so many online support groups. I belong to several email lists and several Facebook pages, all for polio survivors. I've learned so much from these groups. In case any of you are interested in the Facebook forums, here is a list. Just go to the search bar on Facebook and type in these names. Some are closed groups, meaning that even though anyone can see the names of members, only members can read what is on those pages, while others are open groups. Posts in open groups can be read by anyone.

**Post Polio** is a closed group. *Click on the About tab and you can see if a group is Open or Closed.*

**Harvest Center's Post Polio Coffee House** is an Open group started by Dr. Richard Bruno.

**Post Polio Syndrome** is an open group.

**Post-Polio Network RSA** is a closed group. The RSA stands for Republic of South Africa. Some of you might know Cilla Webster from South Africa. This is her group.

**Power Chairs R Great** is an open group that is meant for discussion of power chairs and our experiences with them.

**Land of The Sky Post-Polio Support Group** is another Open group.

**Polio History** is an Open group.

There are probably even more out there, but I find that reading the posts on these keeps me pretty busy. It is just good to know that we are not alone, that whatever problems we are experiencing, someone has been there, done that and will listen without judging.

One of my online friends, Cindy Koshinski Bernstein posted this and I asked if I could share it. She said it came from a friend of hers and they didn't know the author:

#### 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR REDUCING STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

1. Thou Shalt Not Be Perfect, Or Even Try To Be
2. Thou Shalt Not Try To Be All Things To All People.
3. Thou Shalt Sometimes Leave Things Undone That Ought To Be Done.
4. Thou Shalt Not Spread Thyself Too Thinly.
5. Thou Shalt Learn To Say No.
6. Thou Shalt Schedule Time For Thyself And Thy Supportive Network.
7. Thou Shalt Switch Off And Do Nothing Regularly.
8. Thou Shalt Be Boring, Untidy, Inelegant, and Unattractive At Times.
9. Thou Shalt Not Even Feel Guilty.
10. Especially, Thou Shalt Not Be Thine Own Worst Enemy But Be Thine Own Best Friend.

I will leave you with these commandments and my sincere wishes for a wonderful 2013, filled with love, laughter, and friendship. Remember to Conserve to Preserve.

## WEB CORNER

**Here is a site about Handicapped Accessible Homes:**

<http://www.house-design-coffee.com/handicap-accessible-homes.html>

### **New and Improved Website**

The RRTC on Aging with a Physical Disability is pleased to announce the launch of our new website: <http://agerrtc.washington.edu>. The new website offers a new contemporary look and streamlined user experience. It features enhanced resources and functionality designed exclusively for the cross-section of Aging & Disability community.

### **New Factsheets on Aging Well with a Physical Disability**

The website is a true resource for people aging with multiple sclerosis (MS), spinal cord injury (SCI), and neuromuscular disease (post-polio syndrome or muscular dystrophy) offering critical educational information; including [Aging Well with Physical Disability Factsheets](#) and a collection of articles we've written for other serial publications.

### **More information on research results**

The enhanced "[Publications](#)" section affords visitors the ability to see every RRTC publication (research articles, conference presentations, etc.) and search by keyword or filter to by a specific person.

### **New ways to stay connected**

Other updates include new ways to stay connected to our research and find out what we're learning: a News Blog, "[What's New from the RRTC](#)", a quarterly e-Newsletter, and [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

To see the new website, please visit: <http://agerrtc.washington.edu>

### **Stem Cell 101: Mayo Clinic Expert Answers Commonly Asked Questions**

<http://www.newswise.com/articles/>

### **A Bit of Humor**

Harmonica for Christmas

"Thanks for the harmonica you gave me for Christmas," Little Johnny said to his uncle the first time he saw him after the holidays. "It's the bestest Christmas present I EVER got!"

"That's great," said his uncle. "Do you know how to play it?"

"Oh, I don't play it," Little Johnny said. "My mom gives me a dollar every day not to play

it during the day and my dad gives me five dollars a week not to play it at night!"

### The Snowball

I made myself a snowball,  
As perfect as could be,  
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,  
And let it sleep with me.

I made it some pajamas,  
And a pillow for its head,  
Then last night it ran away,  
But first - it wet the bed!