

Surgery and post polio

Polio survivors should be aware of special considerations regarding surgical procedures requiring anesthesia. There are several considerations anesthesiologists (doctors that specialize in sedation during surgery) should consult with the patient before surgery.

Make sure that your anesthesiologist is aware of your history of polio. He or she may not be aware of the special precautions that must be taken, as polio patients may have respiratory impairment, sleep apnea, swallowing difficulties, chronic pain and cold intolerance. They may also display altered sensitivity to any of the medications commonly used for regional and general anesthesia. Once aware of these considerations, surgery attendants will be better prepared to provide safe care to patients with post polio syndrome or any patient with a history of polio.



Medications

- Analgesics (narcotics such as codeine, morphine, valium, etc.) may depress the cough reflexes, decreasing the ability to breathe or cough properly. This may lead to the inability to clear the lungs of secretions with increased muscle weakness
- Muscle relaxants may further impair the ability to breathe, cough, move your body or do routine activities
- Sedatives and hypnotic drugs – will decrease the respiratory drive and increase drowsiness
 - This will lead to shallow breathing, ineffective coughing and even deep vein thrombosis with lack of movement

Discuss your Symptoms

As always, discuss your symptoms and concerns with your doctor before any procedure. If your medical team is unaware of the symptoms of post polio syndrome, take the time to make them aware of your symptoms. Regardless of your diagnosis, coming up with solutions to address your symptoms such as respiration issues or cold intolerance, will result in a better outcome for everyone.

Preparing for Surgery

In preparation for your surgery, consider the following:

- Will you be able to use your assistive devices (cane, crutches, wheelchair, etc.) after surgery?
- Will there be aids like grab bars and other assistive devices during your stay in hospital?
- When is your surgery scheduled? What will be your level of fatigue?
- If there are pre-surgery tests or procedures, will your energy levels be able to accommodate this?
- Have you properly planned a routine upon your return home – extra help or assistive devices in place to ensure your safety and independence?

Article References for Medical professionals

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- ◇ ***Preventing Complications in Polio Survivors Undergoing Surgery***. Richard L. Bruno, Ph.D.2000.
- ◇ ***You are going to have surgery: A Guide for Polio Survivors***. Walker, J.M. (P.T.), 1996.
- ◇ ***Post-Polio Syndrome: A Guide for Polio Survivors and Their Families***. Julie Silver M.D.; 2001, Yale University.