

## 10 Gold Nuggets for People with Polio

*Practical, positive, and research-informed strategies for living with the late effects of polio*

1. **Fatigue is real – and you're not imagining it**

Many people living with the late effects of polio experience overwhelming tiredness that doesn't go away with rest. This isn't laziness or weakness – it's a recognised symptom caused by long-term changes in your nervous system. Learning to listen to your body and work with your energy, not against it, can help you feel more in control.

2. **Rest is part of the plan – not a reward**

You don't have to earn rest. In fact, regular rest breaks can help you do more, not less. Short, scheduled rests during the day can prevent the energy crashes that happen when you push through too far. Pacing your activities helps preserve energy and protect your body.

3. **Movement is important – but the right kind matters**

Gentle movement helps with circulation, strength, and mood. But polio-affected muscles can be vulnerable to overuse. Low-resistance, short-duration activities are usually best. Focus on what feels manageable – walking in water, supported cycling, or stretching may be better than heavy or prolonged exercise.

4. **You are not just getting old**

It's easy to blame new symptoms like pain, fatigue, or weakness on ageing. But if you had polio, these changes may be part of the late effects of polio. You deserve support and understanding – not dismissal.

5. **Braces, scooters, and walking sticks are tools – not failures**

Using aids doesn't mean you've given up. The right equipment can save energy, reduce pain, prevent falls, and give you more independence. What matters is what helps you feel safe, confident, and comfortable.

6. **Falls happen – but there's help available**

Many people with polio have balance issues, weakness, or joint changes that increase fall risk. You're not clumsy – there's often a clear reason behind each fall. A trained clinician can help you improve safety, review your equipment, and support your confidence.

7. **Pain can be managed – and it should be**

Muscle and joint pain are common in polio survivors, especially in areas doing extra work to compensate for weakness. Don't put up with it in silence. There are ways to reduce strain, support your joints, and feel more comfortable in daily life.

8. **You don't have to prove anything anymore**

Many people with polio have spent their lives pushing themselves harder to "keep up" or avoid looking disabled. You don't need to do that now. It's okay to slow down, ask for help, or do things differently – especially if it means protecting your health and energy.

9. **Your experience is valid – and you are not alone**

You may not meet many others who had polio, but there is a community out there. Talking to someone who understands what you're going through can make a huge difference. Whether it's a support group or a trusted friend, connection matters.

10. **You deserve support that fits your life today**

What worked for you 10 years ago might not work now – and that's okay. You are allowed to change how you do things. A knowledgeable physio or occupational therapist can work with you to find new strategies that support the life you want to live.

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