

# So I had a Fall - what next?

by Tessa Jupp RN

We have had a few people falling lately so it may be time for a reminder that it can and probably will happen to all of us sooner or later and we need to be vigilant and take extra care to prevent falls.

It is not only the bruises and grazes that might result from your fall - but the extra longer lasting damage we do.

**A real danger time is when there are other people around.**

You may be distracted and **talking to them** so **not concentrating** on moving the way you usually do.

Or you might not want to be seen to appear awkward, or **want to be seen as "normal"**, or simply not want to hold others up, or slow them down!

Either way, when we hurry or try to get up or walk in a different way to the way we usually do it, our bodies let us down, give way, twist the wrong way, **we are distracted**, forget to concentrate on what we are doing - and **our usual "safe" way**.

The other thing that happens is - **people want to help us** - and they don't know to do it "**our**" way.

Polios often have "**trick movements**" they use to make up for missing or weak muscles. We have used these successfully for many years and someone wanting to change the way we move (or stand or walk, or the shoes we wear, the caliper or stick/crutch we use) can **upset that delicate balance - and down we go**.

Polios often "know how to fall". If we "**go with the fall**" - "like a rag doll" we are probably less likely to hurt ourselves badly. It is when we (or someone else) try to save ourselves, that we do more damage.

**For example** - someone thinks they are being helpful by holding your arm as you get up from a chair, you end up off balance, throw out your other arm to steady yourself or to grab something to hold on to - and wrench, strain, pull - the muscles or tendons in that arm or shoulder. This then becomes an injury - doctor's visits, x-rays, MRI's, ultrasound, endless physio appointments, painkillers, anti-inflammatories, hydrotherapy - the list goes on.

**Another example** - you sat in a chair that was a bit too low and now you have to get up out of it. If you are on your own, you may work out a safe way and slowly ease yourself up, getting your balance, using things around you. But if there are others there, you are distracted, talking - they may offer to help and pull you the wrong way - or you may refuse help, and you try to get up too quickly, just to prove you can do it.

You **become unbalanced** and fall, or **twist** the wrong way and sprain your ankle/knee, or tear a ligament or muscle, or bend it the wrong way - another injury that will take ages to fix.

Or - you take a real tumble and **break a bone** - wrist, arm, ankle, leg, hip. Any time not moving for polios, will quickly result in further weakness and muscle deterioration. Don't do it!

**So you are down** - take a deep breath, wait a minute, evaluate yourself. Don't get up too quickly. If someone wants to help - make sure you tell them what you want to do. You may be better off getting up yourself in your own way.



## Fall Prevention Tips

1. **Concentrate - finish task**
2. **Stop first, then change**
3. **Go at your pace**
4. **Accept help carefully**

And if your leg or arm won't support you, or if you are dizzy, you could quickly be right back where you started. **Take your time.** And take time to get over a fall. A fall is a stressful event - and a shock to the system!

## FIRST AID FOR FALL INJURIES

1. Apply **Hirudoid cream** (a chemist line) to **sore, bruised**, swollen areas ASAP, 4 hourly as needed for next few days or so. **Great for soft tissue injuries.**
2. Apply **Iodine** to any **grazes** and leave open to air.
3. Take **extra Manganese** for any **tendon, ligament injuries** or stiffness. May need 3-4 twice a day.
4. For **Fractures** - lick top third of forefinger, dip in **Borax** powder and lick off what sticks, twice a day **with extra magnesium** to bowel tolerance. This will take the pain out of the fracture site **within 48 hours** and speed healing of the bony surfaces.

# How Much Exercise should I do?

Another question that keeps coming up. **How much is too much?**

Everyone is of the opinion that if you are getting weak - you need to exercise more. This is NOT the case for Polio survivors. The muscles that are left are **already working overtime**. We do not register ANY WEAKNESS at all until we fall below 50% of normal muscle capacity. Too much exercise will increase the rate of muscle deterioration. But so will not doing enough. We each need to find that **happy medium that applies to us at this point in time**. We also need to give our muscles **carnitine (red meat) for energy** to work and **magnesium** to allow relaxation to be able to work again. And we need **REST TIME**.

## YOU HAVE DONE TOO MUCH IF -

- \* you feel **tired** at the **end of an activity**
- \* you are **exhausted** the **next day**
- \* muscles or joints **ache** the **next day**
- \* legs feel like "**jelly**" or "**lead boots**"
- \* muscles are "**jumping**" or "**twitching**"
- \* **cramps** or "**charlie-horses**" occur
- \* "**creepy**", "**crawling**" sensations under skin