



PSV News

POLIO SERVICES VICTORIA

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P O L I O
S E R V I C E S
V I C T O R I A

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PSV CLINICS 2002

Metropolitan Clinics

Clinics are held most Tuesday afternoons at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. We recommend that everyone is reviewed by PSV at a clinic, or over the telephone every twelve months. If you haven't been in contact with the service in the last year, and you have some issues that need addressing, call us for a review of your situation.

Regional Clinics

This year there are six regional clinics scheduled. We have already visited Bairnsdale in February, Bendigo in May, Horsham in June and Shepparton in August. Later in the year we plan to go to Swan Hill (October) and Korumburra (December).

Anyone who is interested in attending either a metropolitan or a regional clinic should let the staff at PSV know at the earliest opportunity so that your needs can be met on the day.

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VOCATIONAL ISSUES

For many polio survivors work can have its own set of challenges. It has been reported in the literature that as polio survivors become older they often experience excessive fatigue, pain and new muscle weakness. These physical changes can affect people's activities of daily life including their work performance. This can be seen in the following ways. For example, you may find:

- You have difficulty getting up and getting to work on time.
- Doing the same job makes you very tired.
- It is very difficult to be as productive as you used to be.
- You get pain at work, which does not occur when you are at home.
- It is difficult to access the building where you work.
- It is difficult to walk long distances within the work place.
- It is difficult to sit comfortably at a computer for long periods of time.
- You have difficulty with manual handling tasks, e.g. lifting, carrying and moving documents or furniture.

There are a number of practical solutions that may be able to assist with some of these difficulties. To get the job done consider the following recommendations:

- Prioritizing tasks to be done. Do those tasks that require the most concentration or physical effort when

you feel your best.

- Pace yourself during the day. Incorporate frequent rest breaks.
- Perform computer based work at home to reduce hours at work without reducing pay.

Often symptoms can be aggravated by the way the workplace is set up, e.g. distances between the car park and the front door, distances walked during the day, or the set up of a work station.

The following suggestions may assist:

- Making sure your car space is close to the front door of the building.
- You may consider a walking aid if walking long distances causes excessive fatigue.
- Reduce the amount of walking done by re-organising your work schedule.
- Make sure that your office chair is adjusted appropriately.
- At your work station, make sure the placement of equipment reduces over reaching, twisting, and holding your body in the one position for long periods of time.

If you regularly have to carry equipment as part of your job, make sure you are using an assistive device and the appropriate manual handling principles.

- Use a simple trolley for moving objects within the building.
- If you use a lap-top and take it to and from work, consider using a light suitcase trolley instead of carrying it.
- When lifting objects, get help if the object is too heavy or awkward.
- Lift objects off the floor in a half kneel or squatting position. Try not to lift with a bent back, but use your leg muscles to do the work.

It is recommended that you speak to your employer about any difficulties you are having, as most employers are willing to help staff manage their work.

The Occupational Therapist at PSV is able to visit your workplace to assess your work environment and discuss any manual handling issues that you may have. However, you will require approval from your employer before such a visit can take place.

HEALTH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

With the rapid advance in technology over the past decade, the internet has become a very easily accessible source of information. However, at present there is no governing body that can police what information is placed on the internet. As such, there is both accurate and inaccurate information available which creates a dilemma for the user as to what information to believe, and what information to ignore. This is especially the case when medical information is being sought as accurate information can assist in the understanding of the topic being researched, but inaccurate information can cause undue concern and jeopardize health care provision.

When looking for medical information from websites there are some simple steps to follow that may assist in determining if information is credible or not. Medical websites should disclose the source of their information. The date that the original document was written should be clearly displayed, as well as any more recent updates that have been made. The hierarchy of evidence should also be given. This refers to whether the various pieces of information are valid (sound/well-grounded/accurate) or methodologically sound (the level of worth of information gained through the way the project was structured) and this will allow you to assess the strength of the recommendations being made.

Keep in mind that the reputation or the popularity of a site, or the perceived expertise of an author does not necessarily equate to the quality or accuracy of information. There are a number of good websites that may be helpful in expanding on these issues and how to address them:

- www.biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/factors is a website that through a process of discovery, evaluation, description, indexing and classification, provides a point of access to high quality Internet-based information. With the emphasis that BIOME places upon the careful identification of high quality resources, the evaluation of information inevitably forms a major focus.
- www.omni.ac.uk/ is a website that offers free access to a searchable catalogue of internet sites covering health and medicine.
- www.discern.org.uk is a site that outlines a questionnaire that can be used to provide users with a valid and reliable way of assessing the quality of written information on treatment choices for health problems.
- www.medcertain.org/ is a site that aims to provide MedPICS Certification - a rating of trustworthy health information on the net.

If you have any further queries about information that you have come across and its accuracy, please feel free to contact PSV.

References:

Kunst et al Accuracy of information on apparently credible websites: survey of five common health topics. *British Medical Journal* 324(7337): 581-581
Wilson, P. How to find the good and avoid the bad or the ugly: a short guide to tools for rating quality of health information on the internet. *British Medical Journal* 324(7337):598-600

FOOTWEAR

People who have had paralytic poliomyelitis often have residual weakness as well as some tightened muscles. When the weakness and tightness is in the lower limbs there is often associated foot problems. In addition to this, having had polio as a child, can result in the foot not fully developing as the skeleton is not yet mature. This may mean that you have one foot that is smaller than the other. Both these problems can have major

implications for fitting footwear in terms of comfort, cosmesis, balance and safety.

While accommodating foot problems can be difficult there are many things that can be done to footwear to help alleviate problems. Firstly, when choosing new shoes they should feel comfortable and fit well the first time they are put on. Have your shoes fitted at the end of the day when your feet are at their largest. The shoes should be fitted while standing as the foot will spread when there is weight on it. It is therefore best if someone can check the fit ensuring there is a thumb's width from the end of your longest toe to the end of the toe box.

The type of footwear worn with an orthosis (caliper) is important. The shoe should be solid, preferably leather, with a high, firm heel counter and laces. Some people may need custom made shoes to cater for their foot deformity. There are many different options available including different depths of the shoe, claw toe accommodation, assorted sole types, removable inserts and split sizes.

Make sure that you have the orthosis on when the shoes are being fitted, and where possible remove the inside liner of the shoe to allow more room for your foot and the orthosis inside. You may actually require a half size bigger than your usual size to allow the orthosis to fit comfortably.

If you have a leg length discrepancy you may require a shoe build-up internally or externally. Other modifications to the shoe may be necessary to assist with the orthosis function. This may include shoe raises, flares to the sole, bolsters or rockersoles. All of these adjustments can be done in the orthotic department where the orthosis was made.
