

## World Polio Day, October 24, 2023

By Prof. Michael Kossove and Stanley Rose

COVID has been the number one global health problem of the 21st century. Polio was the number one global health problem in the 20th century.

Those born after 1955 have no first-hand knowledge of what prior polio epidemics were like, except if you grew up with family or friends who were polio survivors. Those people understand how debilitating the disease can be. Otherwise, the word “polio” might just trigger your memory to a vaccine you received in the doctor’s office as a child.

On October 24th, 2023, Polio Awareness Day is recognized around the world. There remain approximately 700,000 polio survivors alive in the United States, and there are millions more worldwide.

Why should you remember this Polio Awareness Day? Because of this disease, a vaccine was invented to keep people from contracting it.

Because of this vaccine:

1. You will never have to worry about being in a hospital for months or years, because some part of your body is paralyzed by polio.
2. You will never have to worry about being in a respirator for months or years to assist your breathing, otherwise you could die. Thousands of polio patients died in this way.
3. You will never have to worry that parts of your body below the neck being paralyzed by the polio virus.
4. You will never have to worry about losing your upper and/or your lower body strength because of overexertion of muscles weakened by polio.
5. You will never have to worry about undergoing months or years of painful physical rehabilitation to try to regain muscle strength lost to polio.
6. You will never have to learn how to walk with crutches and leg braces.
7. You will never have to be confined to a wheelchair because of weakness caused by polio.
8. You will never have to worry about getting Post-Polio Syndrome, which increases the severity of your disability, 20 to 50 or more years later.

There was no vaccine for polio survivors, but there is for you. Without it THESE THINGS COULD HAPPEN TO YOU. There is no cure for polio. Once you get it, you will be affected for the remainder of your life.

Polio survivors celebrate this day because of the vaccine—we know that those who receive it will never have to endure what we did. It’s a day to remind people about what polio was, and what it can be without the vaccine.

Mark October 24 on your calendar. On this day of polio awareness, take a moment to reflect on how lucky you are not to have endured what the polio survivors did before the vaccine. Make sure that you and your family are vaccinated. It’s never too late (no matter what your age, from infant to senior) to get the vaccine, it’s safe. Viruses are not alive but can remain in nature indefinitely. It only takes one person who contracts polio to start another epidemic.

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