Post-polio syndrome (PPS) is a syndrome that affects some people who have had polio (poliomyelitis) and occurs many years (typically from 10 to 40 years) after recovery from the initial infection. It is characterized by the development of progressive weakness in muscles that were affected by the original polio infection. In addition, those affected may experience extreme fatigue and joint pain. Skeletal deformities, such as scoliosis, may occur as a result of this syndrome. There is variation in the severity of symptoms. In severe cases, symptoms may mimic those of the rare disorder known as Lou Gehrig's disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). The degree of muscle atrophy during the post-polio period appears to reflect the severity of the impact of the initial polio infection. People who were significantly affected by polio are more likely to experience severe symptoms from post-polio syndrome. The cause of this syndrome is not known. Although exact numbers are not available, it has been estimated that there are 300,000 polio survivors in the United States and that from one-fourth to one-half of them may ultimately develop some degree of post-polio syndrome. Post-polio syndrome affects people who have had acute episodes of poliomyelitis. It occurs 10 years or more after the original illness, and can occur as long as 40 years afterward. According to one estimate, 25% to 50% of the 300,000 polio survivors in the United States may develop the syndrome. At the present time, there is no known way to prevent the syndrome. Diagnosis of post-polio syndrome is made on the basis of a thorough history, a neurological examination, and the process of excluding other possible diseases through various tests. In making the diagnosis, physicians will be aware of three factors. a prior diagnosis of polio, an interval of one or more decades since the original acute episode, and slow, steady, progressive deterioration.