

You're diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease - Self Management

The information provided in this handout is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or physiotherapist.

Content of this handout is extracted from national and international Parkinson's Disease organizations, peer reviewed scientific research articles.

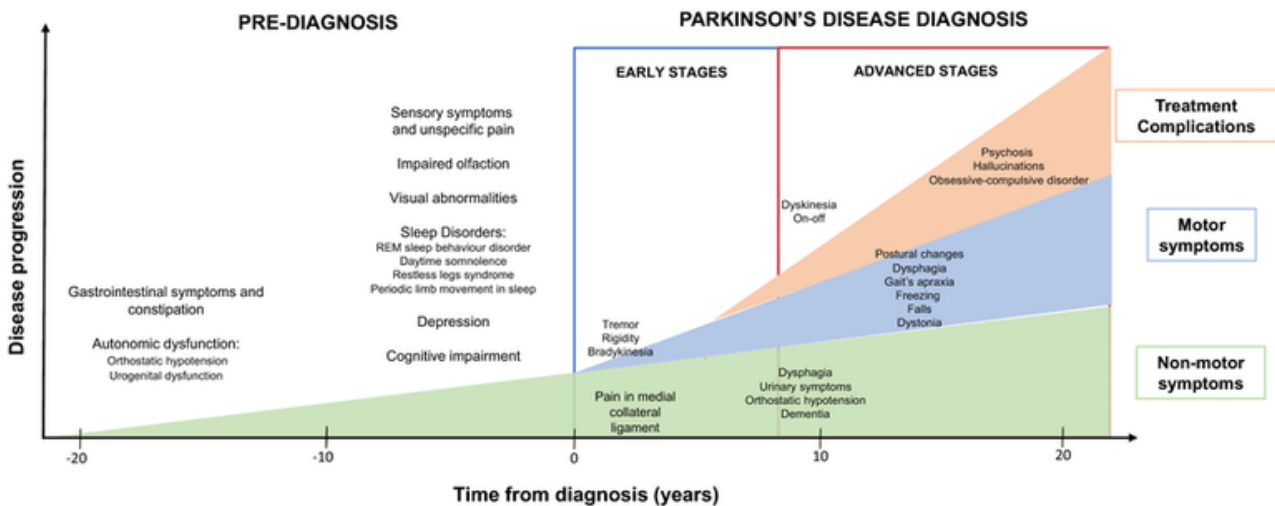
If you or your family members have questions after reading this handout, please contact your doctor and or therapist in-charge.



Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement.

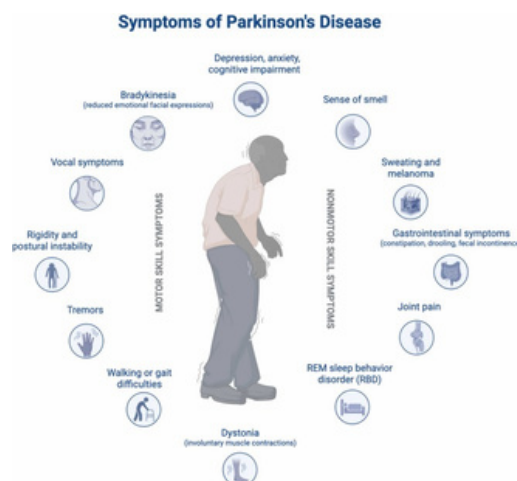
Parkinson's disease progresses over time, often taking years before symptoms appear. Because it develops gradually, most people have many years of productive living after being diagnosed.



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Chronology-of-clinical-symptoms-in-Parkinsons-disease-modified-from-Kalia-et-al-8_fig2_339186483

Living with Parkinson's - What You Can Do

Work with your doctor to create a medicine schedule that works best for you. Most people with PD take several different medicines to manage their symptoms. Without medicines, your problems with balance, talking, chewing, and swallowing may continue to get worse.



Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1568163722002768>

Medicine

Find ways that help you to best manage your medicines; here are some suggestions:

Create a calendar or a notebook where you keep track of your medicine schedule.



Use a timing device such as a watch with an alarm, a smart phone, or another alarm to remind you when to take your pills.



Use a pill organizer labelled by the day and the times to take your medicines.



Fill all of your prescriptions at the same pharmacy. This will help avoid possible harmful drug interactions (how the drugs you take affect each other in your body).



Some medicines taken for other conditions can interfere with dopamine and make PD worse. These may be prescribed for such things as mental illness, sickness, vertigo and dizziness. Check with your doctor if you are unsure about any medicines that you take.

Work with your therapist to create a plan to stay as healthy and active as possible. Start a regular exercise program to slow the progress of the disease. Know that many people with PD have an increased risk of falling. This is because muscle stiffness, being bent over, shuffling when you walk, and freezing can easily cause a loss of balance.



The following are some strategies to manage the condition effectively to have better quality of life:

Balance

- If you have a tendency to fall backward or feel lightheaded, move slowly when changing positions.
- When turning around, don't pivot your body. Walk forward and make a wide U-turn to avoid sharp turns that could cause you to lose your balance.
- When arising from bed, sit on the side of the bed for 15 seconds before standing. Stand in place with support for an additional 15 seconds before walking. This can prevent dangerous falls.
- For balance, try using a single-point cane with a large rubber tip.
- A decrease in automatic reflexes complicates trying to do two things at once. For example, it may be difficult to walk and look away at something or attend to a conversation at the same time.
- Minimize distractions for maximal gait and balance control.



Standing

- If you have to stand for an extended period, keep your feet slightly apart for better balance.
- If getting out of a chair is difficult, place your feet directly under your knees and stand up firmly to overcome the pull of gravity. Rather than bearing excessive weight on the hands and arms to stand erect, use the large thigh muscles to propel the body upward.
- Practicing this maneuver strengthens the quadriceps muscle and helps maintain independent ambulation.



Walking

- Avoid shoes with rubber or crepe soles. These stick to the floor and may cause you to trip.
- Consciously lift your feet when you walk. This will help you to keep from shuffling or falling due to foot drag.
- Don't carry objects in both hands when you walk! This can cause you to lose your balance.
- Swing both arms freely when walking; this may require a deliberate effort, since the automatic nature of many movements is diminished in Parkinson's. Gently swinging the arms helps maintain balance and lessens fatigue.
- If feet feel frozen or "glued to the floor" when initiating movement, several physical strategies can break the pattern: One can step over an actual or imaginary obstacle in the path to continue forward motion.
- Rocking from side-to-side also can break the sensation of being "stuck in place."
- It is not helpful for a companion to pull the patient forward or urge the patient verbally to "hurry up," this will often prolong the freezing episode.



Stay as active as possible. Please adhere to the exercise program as prescribed by your therapist as much as you are able. This may not be possible when the condition is more advanced. However, it is something to consider when symptoms are not severe.

You may walk more slowly than before but a daily walk is good exercise and may help to loosen up stiff muscles.

Well-meaning relatives or friends may tell you to rest and take things easy. However, as much as possible and for as long as possible, resist the temptation for others to do things for you just because it may be quicker.

Constipation is common in people with PD. Help to reduce the chance of this by having lots to drink and eat plenty of vegetables, fruit, and foods high in fibre.

Exercise can also improve constipation. Sometimes laxatives may be needed to treat constipation.



Do people with Parkinson's have pain?

- Muscle cramps, rigid muscles, Arthritis (inflamed joints), Tendonitis (inflamed tendons)
- Aching because of poor posture
- Painful contractures (permanent shortening of muscles), from lack of movement over a long time
- Painful and lasting twisting that causes dystonia (holding the head, neck, or torso in an unnatural position)

Pain management may include:

- Adjusting your anti-Parkinson's medication
- Physical therapy
- Anti-inflammatory drugs or other types of pain medication

Please discuss with your doctor and or therapist for further clarifications.

Where can I find resources about Parkinson's Disease?

- Parkinson society Singapore - www.parkinson.org.sg
- American Parkinson Disease Association – www.apdaparkinson.org
- National Parkinson Foundation - www.parkinson.org
- Parkinson's Action Network – www.parkinsonaction.org
- Parkinson's Disease Foundation – www.pdf.org



Contributed by Physiotherapy, Rehabilitation, Allied Health Services

This brochure is produced for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health or medical condition.

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