

Your Care Instructions

Parkinson's disease can cause tremors, stiffness and problems with movement. Severe or advanced cases can also cause problems with thinking. In Parkinson's disease, part of the brain cannot make enough dopamine, a chemical that helps control movement. Taking your medicines correctly and getting regular exercise may help you maintain your quality of life.

There are many things that can cause Parkinson's disease symptoms, including some medicine, toxins and trauma to the head. The cause in most cases is not known.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

General care

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor or nurse call line if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Make sure your home is safe:
 - Place furniture so that you have something to hold on to as you walk around the house.
 - Use chairs that make it easier to sit down and stand up.
 - Group the things you use most, such as reading glasses, keys, and the telephone, in one easy-to-reach place.
 - Tack down rugs so that you do not trip.
 - Put no-slip tape and handrails in the tub to prevent falls.
- Use a cane, walker, or scooter if your doctor suggests it.
- Keep up your normal activities as much as you can.
- Find ways to manage stress, which can make symptoms worse.
- Spend time with family and friends. Join a support group for people with Parkinson's disease if you want extra help.
- Depression is common with this condition. Tell your doctor if you have trouble sleeping, are eating too much or are not hungry, or feel sad or tearful all the time. Depression can be treated with medicine and counselling.

Diet and exercise

- Eat a balanced diet.
- If you are taking levodopa, do not eat protein at the same time you take your medicine. Levodopa may not work as well if you take it at the same time you eat protein. You can eat normal amounts of protein. Talk to your doctor if you have questions.
- If you have problems swallowing, change how and what you eat:
 - Try thick drinks, such as milk shakes. They are easier to swallow than other fluids.
 - Do not eat foods that crumble easily. These can cause choking.
 - Use a blender to prepare food. Soft foods need less chewing.
 - Eat small meals often so that you do not get tired from eating heavy meals.
- Drink plenty of water and eat a high-fibre diet to prevent constipation. Parkinson's—and the medicines that treat it—may slow your intestines.
- Get exercise on most days. Work with your doctor to set up a program of walking, swimming, or other exercise you are able to do.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor or nurse call line now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have a change in your symptoms.
- You develop other problems from your condition, such as:
 - Injury from a fall.
 - Thinking or memory problems.
 - A urinary tract infection (burning pain when urinating).

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if:

- You lose weight because of problems with eating.
- You want more information about your condition or your medicines.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link at 811.

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