

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PARKINSON DISEASE

In the Clinic  
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## What Is Parkinson Disease?

Parkinson disease affects the part of your brain that helps you move. It causes a variety of signs and symptoms, including tremors, slower movement, sleep issues, and problems with your mood. It usually affects people older than 60 years. Parkinson disease cannot be cured, but the symptoms can be managed.

## Am I at Risk?

Certain things can increase your risk for Parkinson disease, including:

- Family history of Parkinson disease
- Exposure to pesticides
- Drinking water from a well
- Having a job in the agricultural industry, such as a fruit or vegetable picker
- History of head trauma
- Being older than 65 years
- Taking certain medicines

## What Are the Symptoms?

It can take months or years for you to show symptoms of Parkinson disease. The most common symptoms are:

- Tremors or feeling very shaky in your hands, arms, legs, chin, or jaw
- Feeling very slow, weak, sluggish, or tired
- Finding it hard to do things with your hands, like fastening buttons or typing
- Feeling that it's hard to get into bed or out of a chair
- Changes in the way that you walk, such as dragging your legs
- Poor sleep
- Poor mood

## How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your health care professional will ask you questions about your symptoms and medical history.
- You will be given a physical examination.
- Your health care professional might ask you to walk up and down the hallway so he or she can check your movement.
- You might also get an imaging test, such as an MRI or a PET scan.
- You might be referred to a neurologist—a doctor who specializes in the brain.



## How Is It Treated?

- Several medicines can help manage symptoms. Ask your health care professional which is best for you.
- Exercise is very helpful; for example, it can help you with balance and stiffness. Ask your health care professional what exercise is safe for you. You can also ask if physical therapy is right for you.
- A healthy diet can help you stay well with Parkinson disease. This means eating lots of fiber (like in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) and drinking lots of water. It's also important to get enough vitamin D and calcium to prevent osteoporosis. Work with your health care professional to develop a diet that gives you all the nutrients that you need.

## Questions for My Doctor

- How will my symptoms change over time?
- What medicines are best for my symptoms?
- Will my other medicines interact with my Parkinson disease medicines?
- What are the side effects of the medicines?
- Which exercises are safe?
- Can you refer me to a physical therapist?
- Do I need to see any other doctors?
- Is it safe for me to do my daily activities (like driving or going to work or the store)?

## For More Information



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### MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/parkinsonsdisease.html>

### Parkinson's Foundation

<http://parkinson.org>