

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PARKINSON DISEASE

In the Clinic
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What is Parkinson disease?

- Parkinson disease impairs muscle control, movement, and balance.
- It occurs when nerve cells in the brain's substantia nigra area deteriorate and can't produce dopamine.
- As a result, the brain loses the ability to communicate normal muscle movement messages.

Can I prevent it?

- Doctors don't know why Parkinson disease occurs or what causes the neurons to deteriorate.
- Risk for the disease may be increased if a family member has had it.
- It usually affects persons aged 50 years or older.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Tremor in hands, arms, legs, jaw, and face.
- Rigidity of arms, legs, and trunk.
- Slowness of movement (called bradykinesia).
- Impaired balance and coordination.
- Emotional changes, urinary problems or constipation, and sleep disruptions may also occur.
- Simple tasks, such as talking, walking, or eating, may become difficult.

How is it diagnosed?

- There is no specific diagnostic test.



- Diagnosis is based on medical history and a neurologic examination.
- Your doctor may request brain scans or laboratory tests to rule out other diseases.
- Ask your doctor to consult a specialist in movement disorders.

How is it treated?

- Exercise can help maintain physical and mental functioning.
- Medications can increase dopamine levels in your brain or improve its ability to respond to dopamine.
- Such medications can reduce tremor, stiffness, and slowness and improve muscle control, balance, and walking.
- Brain surgery may be recommended for severe Parkinson disease.

For More Information

www.parkinson.org/parkinson-s-disease.aspx
Information on Parkinson disease and a patient hotline (1-800-473-4636) from the National Parkinson Foundation.

www.michaeljfox.org/
Information on living with Parkinson disease and on Parkinson disease research from the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007341.htm
Information on brain positron emission tomography, an imaging test that may be used in diagnosis and treatment.

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