THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PARKINSON DISEASE

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.

Information on brain positron emission tomography, an imaging test that may be used in diagnosis and treatment.