Practical Parkinson's Tips

67 Tips to Help Make Your Life Easier, Happier & More Productive

LIANNA MARIE

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Happier, and More Productive

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This book recommends products that members of our Parkinson's community have used and liked. As an Amazon Associate, we earn from qualifying purchases.

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BATHROOM

1. Put a shower wand in the bathtub to make showering much easier and faster. One great option is made by Aquadance.
2. As soon as possible, buy yourself an electric toothbrush. (Mom said this compulsory!) It can be very hard getting the hand motion going that is needed to brush your teeth with a regular toothbrush.
3. Get rid of bath mats that may slip and buy a rubber mat to put in the bathtub to avoid slipping and/or falling.
4. Install grab bars on the side of the tub to help getting in and out. Also, install grab bars or portable handles on the shower wall to balance when showering and on the wall beside the toilet. Moen makes some great quality grab bars that are easy to install and can fit any bathroom.
5. Consider buying an elevated toilet seat to make standing up easier.
6. Buy an outdoor chair or bench that is webbed or made of resin to put in the bathtub. This can allow you to sit while showering to avoid slipping and also make it easier on your legs. The Drive Medical Chair is an affordable, lightweight, and easily adjustable option.
7. If your bathroom has carpet, remove it. If it's in your budget, consider making your bathroom wheelchair accessible (i.e. widening the door, lowering the sink, building a roll-in shower, etc.)

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BEDROOM

8. Install a poll that stands beside your bed to help you get in and out of it easier. If you can't install a poll because your ceiling is too high, you can install a wooden arm or grab bar on the wall or on your bed. These devices can also help you turn over in bed. One popular medical assist bar for your bed can be found here.

9. Never use flannelette or t-shirt material sheets. Instead, buy ones with a satin finish to allow you to move more freely in bed (don't forget your pillowcases as well).

10. Put night-lights in sockets to make it easier to navigate at night.

11. Put phones or emergency alarm systems in every room. There are many options out there for systems that can alert someone if you're having an emergency at home.

12. If your bedroom is currently positioned a long way away from the bathroom, you may want to consider moving your bedroom closer to make getting there that much easier (especially in the middle of the night).

13. If it's in your budget, buy a bed with controls for raising and lowering.

14. Keep a container with a lid or refillable water bottle and drinking straw by the bed to sip at during the night.

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CAR

15. Apply to get a disabled parking permit so you can park in the closer spots.

16. To make getting in and out of the car easier (if your car does not have leather or vinyl seats) put a piece of slippery fabric on the seat (you can even use a plastic bag).

17. Keep an extra water bottle (plus a straw if you use them) and crackers (if you struggle with nausea when you take your meds) in the car to take medications with.

18. Keep an extra outfit in the car in case you spill something during your outing and need to change.

19. Bring an extra pillow or two for long trips in the car to keep you as comfortable as possible.

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CLOTHING

20. Wear clothing that you don’t have to put on over your head, as this will make it easier for you to get dressed.

21. Buy clothing that does up with snaps and not small buttons, as you may not have the dexterity to do them up. One great shirt made for people with PD is made by Magna Ready. You can learn more about it on our videos page on AllAboutParkinsons.com.

22. Wear smooth soled shoes to avoid tripping.

23. Buy shoes and boots that do up with a zipper to help make them easier to get on. Velcro is also good (but maybe not as stylish).

24. Wear layers of cool clothing (e.g. cotton), as you may need to peel them off if you experience dyskinesia, which can cause your body temperature to go up.

25. If you wear a watch, consider getting one with an expansion band or that does up with Velcro, as it is much easier to put on than one with a buckle.

26. Use a dressing stick (a long stick with a hook on the end of it) to help you get dressed while seated. You can use it to grab clothes off the floor or to position them on yourself without straining from reaching or bending.

    One popular tool you can use to help you get clothes off the floor or grab other items that are out of reach is the Grabber Reacher Tool. Even though these aren’t very high-tech, they can be extremely useful for day-to-day living. Having one of these long, thin tools to act as a secure hand that picks up stuff from the ground can help people with Parkinson’s keep their independence and also help reduce the risk of falling.

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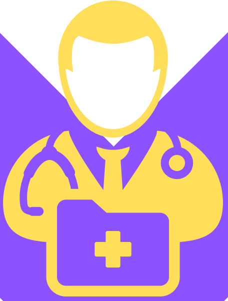
DOCTOR



27. Having a good relationship with your doctor/neurologist cannot be overstated. Being able to talk to him or her about whatever is on your mind, and not being stressed or worried about asking questions is very important. "You have to feel at ease around your doctor," my mom would say. "You need to be able to tell him or her exactly what's happening with you on a daily basis so that he/she can adjust your medications along the way.

    If you don't have a good relationship with your doctor or don't like his or her approach, don't be afraid to get a second opinion. Depending on where you live, there may be other doctors/neurologists/movement disorders specialists options. Get in contact with the closest Parkinson's Association to help them direct you if you don't know where to look.

28. If at all possible, never go to a doctor's appointment by yourself. Always bring a loved one or friend so you have two sets of ears to hear what your doctor has to say. This will help make sure you get all the information he or she covers with you.

29. Always come prepared with your questions and/or concerns written down so you don't forget them. It's a good idea to order your questions in priority sequence as well, in case you don't get the time to ask all of them. Doctors are often busy and only have so much time to spend with you so make sure you get your most important concerns dealt with right away. You can also bring along your PD ON/OFF Diary if you've completed one. These are very useful in helping your doctor calibrate your medications. You can find one on AllAboutParkinsons.com here: PD ON/OFF Diary

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GENERAL LIVING

30. Ask for help. There are many people that will help you if you need it. Sometimes people don't know if you want help so they may avoid asking you. "You don't have to feel like you're going to be stuck," my mom would say. Don't be afraid to tell people you have Parkinson's, either. We always found people to be extremely kind and helpful when we told them about my mom having PD.

31. Avoid STRESS. You've no doubt heard that stress is bad, but it's really bad for people with Parkinson's. Mom learned very early on in her journey with PD how debilitating stress can be (it could cause her body to basically shut down) and tried to avoid it if at all possible. Of course, that was sometimes easier said than done. By focusing on doing what was best for her and not being worried or stressed about the things that were going on around her, the better she was able to manage her body from shutting down.

32. Exercise, exercise, exercise! You hear it all the time, whether you have PD or not, that exercising regularly is important. This proved to be very important in my mom's life. Just the simple act of getting outside once a day to go for a walk or putter around would loosen up her muscles, and diminish any depression she was experiencing.

    Exercise was also very helpful for her when she experienced dyskinesia, as it would often lessen it almost immediately. Exercising is good for your lungs too (another part of your body that is affected by PD). Mom found singing to be a fun way to exercise her lungs.

    If you're looking for ideas of exercises to do with PD, check out my Fighting Parkinson's book - it's full of exercises and activities specifically designed to help fight the symptoms of the disease.

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KITCHEN

33. Buy adaptive utensils so they don't fall out of your hands when you are trying to use them. Another option (but more expensive) is to try Liftware Steady. This is a computerized, stabilizing handle with attachments, including a spoon and fork, which can help reduce mild to medium tremors enough to make it easier for people with Parkinson's to eat. To learn more, go to www.liftware.com.

34. When you're outside of your home for meals, instead of wearing a bib or apron to catch food droppings, use a paper towel or a cloth napkin that can be clipped on to your shirt with a tie clip (for men) or a scarf clip (for women).

35. Stay away from the stove and counters where knives are kept when you have dyskinesia to avoid accidents.

36. To make it easier to grip glasses, fill them halfway, use narrower glasses, or try cups or mugs with two handles. If you don't mind spending a bit more on a very useful cup, you may be interested in something my mom discovered. It's a cup that is great for people with tremors, called the HandSteady.

37. To avoid choking when eating, eat with your chin lowered, looking at your food. Concentrate when eating, especially when you are by yourself.

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LIVING ROOM

38. To avoid slipping and falling, get rid of scatter mats. Also, it is much easier to get around on hardwood or tiled floors than carpet, so you may want to consider eliminating your carpets.

39. Have a “station” where you sit and have as much stuff (e.g. medications, water, cane, books, mobile phone, crafts, etc.) as possible that you might need. When you sit down, it may be a while before you get back up again so the more stuff that you have nearby, the better.

40. Put some slippery fabric on all of your chairs and couches (and cushions) to make it easier to move around on them.

41. To get out of your chair, sit on the edge, put your feet underneath the chair, and “launch” yourself out (this sounds funny, but that’s basically the way Mom would do it). You may need to rock a bit back and forth first in order to gain some momentum. Consider buying adjustable recliners or chairs with straight backs, firm seats, and armrests. This will make standing easier.

42. Get rid of clutter and create clear paths for walking through the room. Remember, open spaces are much easier to navigate for people with Parkinson's and will help reduce potential falls and/or freezing episodes.

43. Add more lights around the house. This can make it easier to navigate at all times of the day. Consider touch or voice-activated lights if these will be easier to turn on and off.

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MEDICATION

44. If you know anything about Parkinson’s medications, you know how important it is that you take them as prescribed. Being on time is especially important; to help you do this, there are various options on the market for pill reminders. Figure out what works best for you and stick to your system. Use the following tips to help.

45. Use a digital sports watch or smartphone that has a countdown repeat timer to keep track of when you need to take your medications. For example, Mom would set hers to beep every 3 hours to remind her to take her meds. Just don't forget to start your countdown again as soon as you've taken your dose!

46. You may choose to use a pillbox with an alarm. One of the more popular ones is the MedCenter 31 Day Pill Organizer with Reminder System.

47. Make a daily medication list and tape it to your fridge. We made and printed one up for mom on the computer that had the whole day planned out for her. (For example, 6:30 AM: 1 Sinemet Control Release + 3 Mirapex, 9:30 AM: 1 Sinemet + 1 Selegiline + 1 Mirapex, etc.)

48. One method of medication packaging that proved very helpful for me while caring for my mom was the blister or bubble pack. Prepared by the pharmacy, blister packs contain designated sealed compartments, or spaces for medicines to be taken at particular times of the day (e.g. breakfast or dinner). In my mom's case, she had her medications grouped and packaged together according to the schedule she was on (meds every three hours). Each pack had the time that she was to take the meds stamped on the outside so I would know when to give them to her.

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SHOPPING

49. Use a buggy/shopping cart when shopping if you are feeling at all unstable. If you are by yourself, make sure you have something in the buggy for added weight so you can lean on it if need be.

50. Look for automatic doors when going in and out of the store, as these are way easier to go through.

51. Most shopping malls and many stores have wheelchairs to borrow for the day. Don't be afraid to ask for one if you are feeling tired or unstable. Mom loved to shop and it wasn't fun when we had to cut the shopping trip short because her legs had shut down. Getting a wheelchair meant we could go for the whole day without worrying about her mobility.

52. Another option for getting around while shopping, is to bring a cane or walker. Walkers on wheels are good for a while but if you have problems with freezing, they may not be for you. Mom used a walker on wheels for some time but then was unable because her feet wouldn't go as fast as the walker and the breaks weren't fast enough.

    A great alternative to traditional walkers that is specifically designed for people with Parkinson's, is the U-Step. What's great about the U-Step is it's not like pushing a typical walker. Instead, the U-Step surrounds you and moves with you. You will feel as stable as you would feel holding onto another person's arm. The brakes are unlike those on other walkers. When you lightly squeeze either brake release lever, the walker will roll with you. Once you release the lever, the unit will stop immediately. (If you've ever used a luggage cart at an airport, it reminds me of these.)

    You can find out more about all the features and benefits of owning a U-Step walker, as well as how to get funding to purchase one if needed, by going to UStep.com

eleven

SLEEPING

53. If restless legs, painful cramping, or abnormal movements are keeping you up at night, it is important you speak with your doctor. He or she may change medication times or dosages (e.g. adding a long-acting dopamine agonist) or order other medications for pain, spasms, cramps, or anxiety.

54. For leg and foot sensitivity in bed, take the pressure off your feet and legs. A bed hoop or a blanket cradle can be useful, or an electric blanket or light down comforter might provide enough relief.

55. Make sure your bedroom environment is relaxing and do your best to stick to a regular sleep schedule. A gentle walk early in the evening might also help. Be sure not to eat late at the night, and avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine, as these might worsen your symptoms and decrease the quality of your sleep.

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SPEAKING

56. Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT) LOUD trains people with PD to use their voice at a more normal loudness level while speaking. A key component to this treatment is helping people "recalibrate" their perceptions so they know how loud or soft they sound to other people and can feel comfortable using a stronger voice at a normal loudness level. You can learn more about LSVT LOUD by going to their website: https://www.lsvtglobal.com/LSVTLoud

57. If people have a hard time hearing you due to your voice being softened or lowered by PD, you may find speech amplification devices helpful. These are portable and easy to use and available for purchase online. For a louder voice on the phone, there are amplified cordless or corded phones to help the other person on the line hear you better.

58. Choose conversations places with minimal background noise if possible, so you don't have to talk over anything (e.g. TV, radio, busy restaurant).

59. Speak slowly, use short sentences, and make sure the person you are speaking to can see you as this increases their ability to understand what you're saying.

60. Plan periods of rest for your voice before conversations or phone calls that you know you'll be having ahead of time. Fatigue significantly affects your speaking ability so techniques that work in the morning might not work later in the day.

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WALKING

61. Create a contrasting pattern on the floor to help you get from A to B more easily at home. In my mom's case, she had a friend cut out white squares (eight-by-eight-inch vinyl with an adhesive back) and stick them to the floor to create a pathway between the kitchen and the bathroom. When my mom needed to get from the kitchen to the bathroom and had trouble walking, she found that looking at the contrasting white squares on the floor helped her brain focus more on getting where she wanted to be. Also, if you trouble walking through doorways (a common problem for people with PD), try walking sideways, a trick that worked well for my mom.

62. Keep music at the ready! It took almost fifteen years of living with Parkinson's for my mom to discover the power of music. She says it was a total surprise to find out how effective it was in getting her mobilized the first time she tried it. While Mom was having an "off" period, she played some music that she liked with a strong beat and in a matter of a few minutes (and sometimes in a few seconds) she was up and moving. It was amazing to watch! Back then Mom played music on a small MP3 player that she hung on a lanyard around her neck, but these days there are many options to bring music wherever you go - smartphones, iPods, etc.

63. Because falls are so prevalent in Parkinson's, it's important the place you are walking is safe and not likely to increase your risk of falling or freezing. Two important things to look for are wide, open spaces, and flat or even ground. Crowded areas can trigger freezing, as can narrow doorways.

64. Check out a video of this man who has taught himself some tricks to help him get walking when his PD legs don't want to. These techniques may or may not work for you, but if you're having challenges with walking, consider giving one of all of these a try: https://www.allaboutparkinsons.com/walk-more-normally-with-parkinsons/

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WRITING

65. If you like to use the computer a lot but find it hard to type, there is voice recognition software called Dragon Naturally Speaking that you can buy that is very affordable. This software allows you to talk into your computer through its microphone and writes down what you are saying. The program can be taught to understand different peoples' voices so that you and anybody else who is using your computer might use it. It is a great tool!

66. Use pen or pencil grips to help you keep hold of them. These are small cylinder-shaped pieces of rubber with a hole in the center that you put your pen or pencil through. It will stay in place until you move it or take it off. You can also try twisting a rubber band around a pen or pencil several times to help you keep your grip.

67. If you have trouble writing smoothly due to shaky tremors in your hands, try the weighted Thixotropic pen. Due to the pen's weight and thickness, it can help control involuntary motion.

ABOUT LIANNA

Lianna Marie served as her mother's caregiver and advocate for over 20 years through the many stages of Parkinson's disease.

In 2005, she founded AllAboutParkinsons.com to connect, educate, and inspire people affected by Parkinson's disease from all over the world.

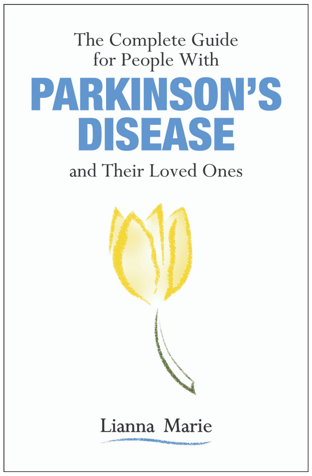
Her first book, *Everything You Need to Know About Parkinson's Disease* (2005, revised edition 2015), has been sold in almost fifty countries worldwide and ranked numerous times on the Amazon bestseller list for books about Parkinson's.

In 2016, Marie followed up on the first book's success with *Everything You Need to Know About Caregiving for Parkinson's Disease*. Both books share the goal of educating and helping everyday people with no specialized training, providing comprehensive information, practical tips, and guidance about dealing with the emotional toll of the disease.

Marie released two new books, *The Complete Guide for People with Parkinson's Disease and Their Loved Ones*, a new revised edition of *Everything You Need to Know About Caregiving for Parkinson's Disease* in the fall of 2020, and looks forward to the release of *The Parkinson's Path* in 2021.

Marie frequently speaks to fellow caregivers, guardians, and nurse practitioners. Born and raised near Toronto, Marie now lives with her husband in the Pacific Northwest. She is a member of the Author's Guild and the Pacific Northwest Writers Association. When she's not writing or speaking, you'll find her in the swimming pool, training for her next competition. An accomplished athlete, she has medaled internationally while representing Canada in both modern pentathlon and swimming.

BOOKS BY LIANNA MARIE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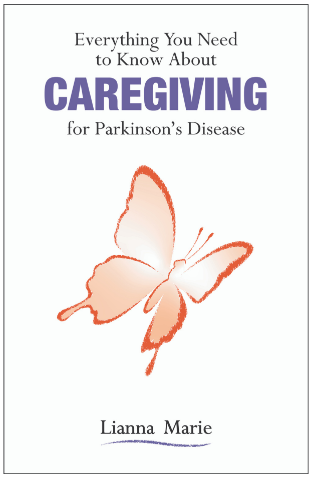
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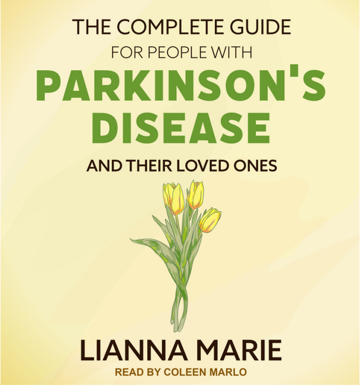
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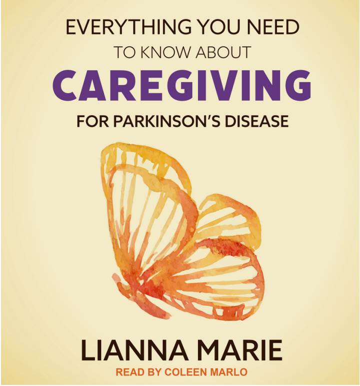
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