

# Parish Health

April 2025

## Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month



There are 90,000 people in the U.S. that are diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease (PD) every year. Currently, researchers believe that the disease is a result of both environmental and genetic factors. People with Parkinson's (PwP) experience both movement and non-movement related symptoms. The symptoms are usually managed through treatments such as medications, lifestyle changes, exercises and, in some cases, surgery. Early onset of Parkinson's Disease can occur in individuals younger than 50 years old.

### **There are 10 early warning signs of Parkinson's Disease:**

1. Tremors, often in the hands or fingers – a tremor while your hand is at rest is a common early sign of PD
2. Small handwriting – change from previous handwriting – are letter sizes smaller and the words are crowded together
3. Loss of smell – if you notice that you no longer smell certain foods very well – such as bananas, dill pickles, or licorice this may be a sign of PD.
4. Trouble sleeping
5. Trouble moving or walking, including stiffness and balance problems
6. Constipation
7. A soft or low voice (change from previous volume)
8. Facial masking, meaning a reduction of facial expressions
9. Dizziness or fainting
10. Stooping or hunching over

No single one of these signs means that you should worry, but if you have more than one sign, consider making an appointment to talk to your doctor.



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How do you or a loved one manage PD symptoms? Parkinson's symptoms fall into two categories: movement and non-movement. Finding the right combination of medications, therapies, exercise, support systems and strategies for maintaining independence can help PwP manage their symptoms and lead a fulfilling life.

### **Tips for managing PD symptoms:**

1. Build your care team: take a patient-centered approach is helpful with living well with Parkinson's
2. Exercise – PwP who exercise for 2.5 hours per week experience a slower decline in their quality of life
3. Medication – most Parkinson's symptoms are caused by a lack of dopamine in the brain, so many of the Parkinson's drugs are aimed at either temporarily replenishing dopamine or mimicking the action of dopamine.
4. Diet and Nutrition: what you eat, how much, and when can impact how well you live with Parkinson's.

Resources that can be helpful to you or a loved one include:

Alexandria Parkinson's Disease Support Group – meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month at 2:30 pm at First Lutheran Church. Please contact the Ann Challes Parish Nurse at 320.762.2196 or [ann.challes@firstlutheranalexandria.com](mailto:ann.challes@firstlutheranalexandria.com) if you have any questions.

Parkinson Organization help line – 1-800-4PF-INFO (1-800-473-4636)

Parkinson Organization website – <https://www.parkinson.org>

Mayo Clinic - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/parkinsons-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20376055>

Minnesota Parkinson's Foundation - <https://www.parkinson.org/minnesotadakotas>

Michael J Fox Foundation - <https://www.michaeljfox.org/>

Davis Phinney Foundation For Parkinson - <https://davisphinneyfoundation.org/>

Sources:

[www.parkinson.org](https://www.parkinson.org)

[www.michaeljfox.org](https://www.michaeljfox.org/)

