



COMMUNITY RESOURCE BULLETIN

April: Parkinson's Awareness Month

In the U.S. 60,000 people are diagnosed with Parkinson's each year

Learn more about this progressive disease

This April, Visiting Angels is proud to help increase awareness Parkinson's disease during **Parkinson's Awareness Month**.

Parkinson's is a chronic and progressive neurological disorder. Almost 1 million people in the U.S. have Parkinson's, including notable people such as Michael J. Fox, Muhammad Ali, and Billy Graham. Unfortunately, there's no cure for Parkinson's, and its cause is unknown.

FOUR MAIN SYMPTOMS

1. Tremor—shaking, trembling that affects hands, legs, or arms. This may be the first symptom.
2. Stiff Muscles
3. Slow Movement
4. Balance or Walking Issues

Parkinson's eventually affects all muscles in the body, leading to problems such as constipation or swallowing. In later stages, people may become expressionless or have difficulty speaking. Symptoms generally start between the ages of 50-60, but some start earlier. Men tend to be more affected than women.



DIAGNOSIS

Parkinson's disease cannot be diagnosed with a blood test. Rather, your doctor will perform a neurological exam which determine how well your nerves respond. An

MRI may be used to rule out stroke or brain tumor.

TREATMENT

While there is currently no cure for Parkinson's disease, medicines help control the symptoms. In some cases, the doctor may suggest a treatment called deep brain stimulation, where surgically placed wires in the brain are placed. Exercise, eating healthy, and getting rest will help you stay independent for as long as possible.

LOCAL RESOURCES:

New Jersey American Parkinson's Disease Association Information and Referral Center, 120 Albany Street, Suite 360, New Brunswick NJ 08901, (732) 745-7520, <http://www.njapda.org>

Phone: (609) 883-8188
www.NJSeniorCare.com

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Stages of Parkinson's Disease

Each person progresses through the five stages of Parkinson's disease differently, but learning the course Parkinson's may take can help to gain a better understanding of the disease and its effects.

Parkinson's disease affects the nervous system of the human body. This limits a person's ability to control some of his or her muscles. It's caused by a slow, gradual loss of certain cells in the brain. These cells make a chemical called dopamine. This chemical is needed for muscles to work normally.

1

Stage: During this initial phase of the disease, a person usually experiences only mild symptoms. Stage I is also known as early-stage Parkinson's disease.

- Signs and symptoms are only on one side of the body.
- Symptoms are inconvenient but not disabling.
- The person usually has uncontrolled tremors or shaking in one limb.
- Friends and family can usually detect changes in the person's posture, loss of balance, and abnormal facial expressions.

2

Stage: In the second stage of Parkinson's disease, a person's inability to complete normal physical tasks becomes more apparent.

- Symptoms are bilateral, affecting both limbs and both sides of the body.
- The person has minimal disability, usually encountering problems walking or maintaining balance.
- Posture is affected.

3

Stage: Stages III, IV, and V are when a person develops significant disability from Parkinson's disease. Stage III is considered moderate Parkinson's disease.

- There is significant slowing of body movements. Walking may become a process of taking small steps and slow movement, which is called a shuffling gait.
- Early impairment of equilibrium results in the inability to walk straight or to stand.
- There is generalized dysfunction that is moderately severe.

Continued on reverse →



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4

Stage: This stage of the disease is accompanied by severe symptoms of Parkinson's. This stage is considered advanced Parkinson's disease.

- Rigidity and bradykinesia are often visible.
- The person is no longer able to complete day-to-day tasks and usually cannot live alone.
- Tremors and shakiness may lessen or become non-existent for unknown reasons during this time.

5

Stage: The last or final stage of Parkinson's disease usually takes over the patient's physical movements.

- The person reaches the cachectic stage (general reduction in vitality and strength of body and mind).
- Invalidism is complete.
- The person may not be able to stand or walk.
- The person requires constant one-on-one care.

Working with a home care company that understands the symptoms and care needs for each of these stages can help relieve many of the worries associated with the future. Visiting Angels will help to anticipate your loved one's care needs and help make life more comfortable.



Remember even though the outside world
might be raining, if you keep on smiling
the sun will soon show its face
and smile back at you.
—ANNA LEE

Providing Care for Parkinson's Disease

A person with Parkinson's disease may visit the doctor for a half hour 4 times a year. But what about the care needed for the other 8,758 hours each year?

Here are some practical day-to-day tips to assist a caregiver in maximizing the independence, safety, and activities of daily living for a loved one with Parkinson's.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET: A well balanced diet can help to reduce cell loss in a person with Parkinson's. Consuming antioxidants can also help to fight oxidative stress.

Sources of antioxidants include blueberries, broccoli, spinach, green tea, dark chocolate, dried fruits and beans, avocado, asparagus, walnuts and almonds, and grape juice or red wine. In addition, make sure any vitamins the doctor has recommended are taken.

SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES: Persons with Parkinson's often experience difficulties chewing, moving food from one part of the mouth to another, and then swallowing properly to ensure food doesn't enter the lungs.

Be sure to learn the Heimlich Maneuver in case your loved one begins to choke.

FIGHT CONSTIPATION: Parkinson's and its medications combine to make constipation a problem. Make sure that the care recipient is consuming plenty of liquids.

Although high-fiber foods are traditionally recommended to prevent constipation, they may cause intestinal gas and cramping that are not tolerated by an older person with Parkinson's. Instead of raw fruits and vegetables, nutritionists recommend dried fruits, hot prune juice, canned fruits and soft cooked vegetables.

BE INFORMED AND AN INFORMER: Learn all about Parkinson's disease—its causes, symptoms and treatment—so that you can be better prepared for the changes in the level of care needed as the disease progresses.

Also keep a diary about your loved one's condition and share this with his or her doctor. If one approach to treatment doesn't work well, insist that others be considered.

FALL PREVENTION: Persons with Parkinson's have a difficult time working the various muscles in their arms and legs to stop themselves from falling when thrown off-balance. Modify the home environment to make things easier and safer to help prevent a fall.

Customize seating, toilets, bathtubs, and showers by installing grab bars where appropriate. Remove tables with pointed edges that could injure your loved one if he or she stumbles. Remove obstructions and hazards in the home such as doorsills and throw rugs.

Continued on reverse →

COMBAT ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION: A significant percentage of persons with Parkinson's disease battle depression and anxiety.

Depression and anxiety can affect short-term memory and concentration and increase a person's motor deficits and physical disabilities. However, depression and anxiety disorders are treatable; thus it is very important to watch for signs of depression or anxiety and have them properly diagnosed.

ON BAD DAYS, ONLY DO ACTIVITIES THAT ARE NECESSARY: Everyday tasks take longer with Parkinson's. They may take even longer on bad days.

Allow time for this, and only do activities that are necessary on the bad days. Be a calming influence. Don't pressure your care recipient to speed up, and respond with tact and humor, not irritability and frustration. If you don't make these allowances, you create a stressful situation that aggravates the Parkinson's symptoms and may actually slow your care recipient even further. There's always tomorrow.

UNDERSTAND MEDICATIONS: Be sure your care recipient's physician tells you about all the expected side effects of medications so you know what to expect.

For example, some medications may cause hallucinations or nightmares. It doesn't hurt to ask your pharmacist for more information. If your care recipient sees a number of physicians, make sure all physicians know the complete list of medications your care recipient is taking. This will help prevent unpleasant or dangerous drug interactions.

ENCOURAGE EXERCISE: Accumulating evidence suggests that exercise can be neuroprotective and may even help "rewire" the brain to some extent.

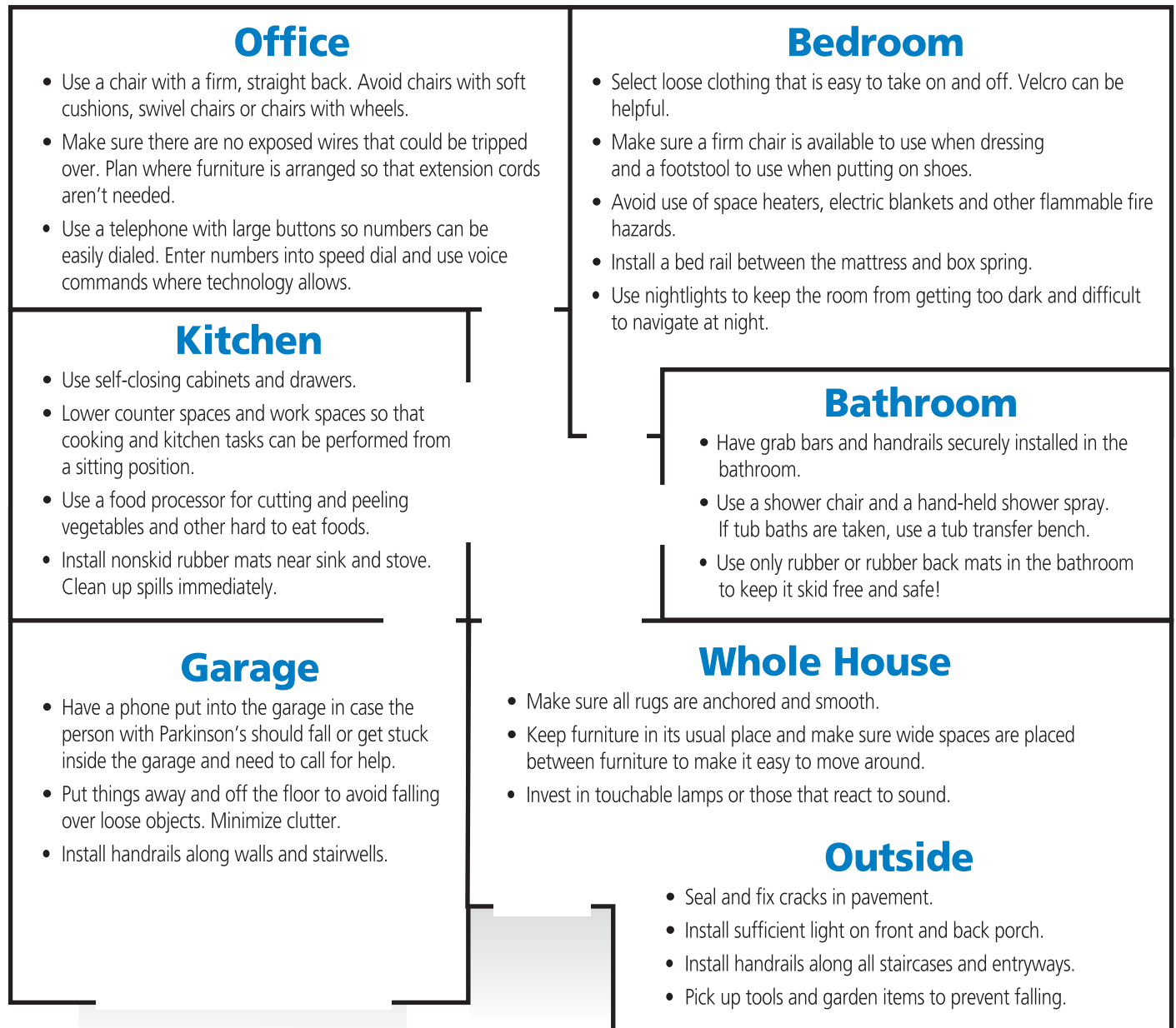
A well-designed exercise program can also increase the benefits of Parkinson's medication, fight depression and promote an overall sense of wellbeing. Prevent fatigue by pacing short exercise sessions throughout the day and when medications are working well and movement is easier. Don't forget to also regularly do the recommended exercises for physical, occupational and/or speech therapy.

Parkinson's is life altering, not life threatening. This means that although life for a person with Parkinson's will change, all the same pleasures are still out there to be enjoyed; they just need a little modifying. Visiting Angels can work with families to find activity and care solutions that will work for their loved one with Parkinson's disease. It will go a long way towards keeping him or her active, independent, and interested in life.



Safe Ideas for a Parkinson's Home

Making a house easy to navigate for an individual with Parkinson's is very simple to do with some quick changes. View our room by room diagram for some fast ideas.



Tips courtesy of Parkinson's Hope.com

Parkinson's Disease Word Search

T A P T T S I R B T P O T G E S S A A E E T Y S L P N R
 N H Y H M S E A O A A S N N R G E T E G E A R H M S N L
 E C L D Y I I C I S L V E G E S R S E N T A E M E S O I
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Parkinsons
 dopamine deficiency
 neurodegenerative
 genetics
 environment

depression
 rest tremor
 bradykinesia
 rigidity
 balance

amantadine
 progressive
 gene therapy
 physical therapy
 antidepressants

ablative surgery
 free radicals
 basal ganglia
 electrophysiological treatment
 hallucinations

Puzzle by Jenniviere Homitz-Daniels



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