



Parkinson Society Canada  

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# Parkinson's: Where to get the help *you need*

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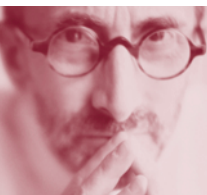
Ease the Burden; Find a Cure



**Y**ou've been told you have Parkinson's. You know it can't be cured but your long-term goal is to remain healthy and active and minimize the impact of Parkinson's on your life.



You are in charge of your own health. But, if and when you need advice about Parkinson's, there are many resources available in your community and people willing to help.



Your local Parkinson organization is an integral part of your support team - see the back of this brochure for local

contacts. They can help connect you with the supportive network of others with Parkinson's.

Parkinson's progresses over many years and at different rates for each person. A variety of health care professionals could play a vital role in helping you manage your symptoms.

Develop an ongoing relationship with people you like and trust. Ideally, they should have experience dealing with Parkinson's.

## **Your Medical Team**

- **Family Doctor** – the person you will see most over the years ... he/she looks after your general health care, conducts annual physical examinations and keeps all your medical records ... initially your doctor may not know a lot about your disease so, as you learn, he/she may also learn more about the management of Parkinson's



- **Neurologist** – a specialist who will either make or confirm the Parkinson’s diagnosis, find the right balance of treatment and make regular adjustments to your medication to ensure it’s working effectively ... visit him/her at least twice a year ... you might want to see a neurologist who specializes in movement disorders
- **Parkinson’s Nurse Specialist** – you may be fortunate to have a movement disorder specialist who works with a nurse to help manage your condition ... this nurse can provide information about coping with day-to-day challenges of Parkinson’s and advice on how to adjust to changes in medication ... he/she is a vital link to other members of your health care team and can recommend and direct you to the help you need - when you need it
- **Pharmacist** – an important part of your team ... make sure you use the same pharmacy outlet all the time and that it has a record of all your medication ... your pharmacist can ensure over-the-counter medication and vitamin supplements do not adversely interact with your prescription drugs ... he/she can provide information about provincial drug reimbursement plans and medical coverage

- **Psychiatrist** – an expert in mental health problems like depression, a common condition for people with Parkinson's ... some patients develop problems like hallucinations, paranoia and other symptoms which require specialized treatment
- **Other medical professionals** - many experts are available to address other medical concerns ... for example, a urologist is an expert in urinary problems and male sexual dysfunction ... these could be a result of Parkinson's, aging or your medication ... don't just accept these concerns ... ask for help

## Additional Members of Your Team

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When you have a concern, don't wait. There are specialists available to help you every step of the way.

- **Physiotherapist** – assesses problems you're having with mobility, balance and posture and recommends sports or exercise programs in your community, suited to your abilities ... he/she can also offer techniques on how to move safely, especially around the house
- **Occupational Therapist** – helps you solve mobility problems you're facing at work, with leisure activities and with personal care and grooming, suggests equipment to buy (e.g. walker) or changes you can make to your home (e.g. bath bars and ramps) ... this advice could avoid costly mistakes and includes a look at tax-deductible purchases

- ***Speech Language Pathologist*** – finds ways to help improve your voice projection or to cope with swallowing problems and saliva control
- ***Social Worker/Psychologist*** – gives advice on emotional, financial and family concerns related to your Parkinson's ... he/she provides individual or family counselling about how to adjust to the changes Parkinson's is making in your life ... a social worker knows how to access available community resources and find the right financial assistance program for you
- ***Dietician*** - advises on how to plan a healthy diet and maintain the right-weight...he/she will show you how to include enough fibre and liquid in your menu planning...you can also get energy-saving tips on meal preparation ... advice is also available on how food and your medication may interact



## If you're a person with Parkinson's, you're not alone!

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It can be difficult to ask for help. Now you may find you can't do all the things you used to, and you may be worried about the future. If you need it, help is available.



## What can you do to get the most help from your Health Care Team?

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... keep informed ... learn all you can about Parkinson's ... call us or visit [www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca) to get up-to-date, reliable information

... look for a support group in your area to learn how others manage Parkinson's ... ask them how various professionals have helped

... when you visit members of your team, be prepared with a list of questions and concerns ... bring a notebook to write down what they say ... ensure they send a written report to your family doctor and neurologist

... establish a good relationship with your team ... ask for and make sure you get the help you need to cope with your disease ... allow them to learn with you about how to manage your Parkinson's

... keep an up-to-date list of the medication you take ... make sure each member of your health care team has a copy

## Look for other professionals to help you plan for the future! |

Everyone needs to be prepared for the future but most of us tend to put off making financial and legal plans.

Long-term financial planning should start as soon as possible. Find a specialist in retirement and estate planning.

Look into your current medical coverage and insurance to determine what you'll need for the future. Check to ensure you have long term

disability coverage. Ongoing drug therapy may not be covered under your existing plan. Learn how you can protect your assets and keep your credit rating in good standing. Ask an accountant/tax expert about ways to maximize tax deductions.



Make sure you have a will and appoint an executor. Get advice on what legal documents might be required so that your wishes on finances, medical and personal care are honoured if you become incapacitated.





## Parkinson Society Canada

is a national organization with partners from coast to coast. We share a vision to ease the burden and find a cure through research, education, advocacy and support services to improve quality of life for all those affected by Parkinson's. Ask us about *Parkinson Post*, our quarterly magazine.

Call your local Parkinson office for information, programs and services in your area, or to make a donation.

*One in a series of brochures produced by*



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1-800-565-3000

[www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca)

e-mail: [general.info@parkinson.ca](mailto:general.info@parkinson.ca)

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