



Niagara Advance

News Sports Arts/Life Features Contact Us

Careers Classifieds Obituaries Autonet Shopping

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012

SUBMIT JOIN | SIGN-IN
Community Sports

Local News

Home News Local News Has your spouse stopped smiling? Parkinson's could be the cause

Has your spouse stopped smiling? Parkinson's could be the cause

Dr. Bill Brown discusses ways to recognize and treat Parkinson's and tremors that are not symptoms of the degenerative disease

By Penny Coles
Posted 23 hours ago

Parkinson's, a degenerative brain disease for which there is no known cause or cure, may go undiagnosed and untreated for years.

While the most common symptom is the tremor associated with the disease, there are other signs that may precede the tell-tale trembling—a slowness or stiffness in walking, soreness or aching muscles or joints—usually more on one side than the other—problems with balance, or difficulties with speaking or writing, says Dr. Bill Brown.

"Someone might notice their spouse doesn't smile as much, or doesn't have the same facial expressions that they're accustomed to seeing. They may seem more placid. They might not be as active, or when they move it might seem a little stiff or wooden."

One foot might drag a little, or one arm might not swing as much as the other when the person is walking.

"These symptoms may be so small and insidious, they are often attributed to old age. Sometimes it takes awhile for them to be put together to form a diagnosis," says Brown, who will talk about Dr. Parkinson's Disease tremors at next week's InfoHealth Session at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

Parkinson's can be diagnosed by a scan that reveals a drop in dopamine—which has probably depreciated by about 50 per cent by the time the symptoms appear, he said.

With him will be pharmacist Sean Simpson, who can talk about the medications that help both the symptoms of Parkinson's and tremors that are unrelated to Parkinson's.

"We want the public to understand the treatment, and the pharmacist understands the medication and its side-effects as much or in some cases more than the physician," says Dr. Brown. "He may know more about what's new and different. The pharmacist has an active role to play in the treatment of Parkinson's."

The disease is common among seniors, says Dr. Brown.

"In NOTL, maybe 10 percent, or even as high as 15 percent, of the population will develop some symptoms, some features of Parkinson's."

Once receiving medication, the symptoms may disappear—muscle aching, soreness and stiffness may be gone, and family members may comment that their loved one's smile has returned.

"The difference can actually be quite dramatic."

But while the symptoms can be relieved, the disease continues to progress. "It's a degenerative disease, and we can't stop the progression."

But there are other tremors that are a completely different issue, although patients may come in concerned that they have Parkinson's, he says.

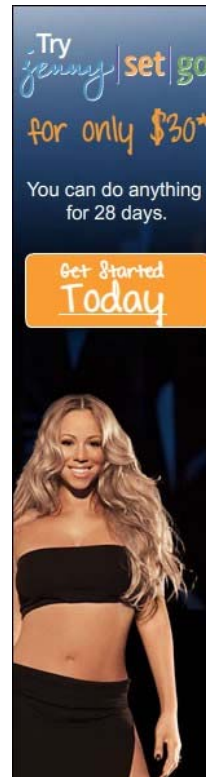
In most cases, there's a genetic component, but the main concern is that people who have hands or voices that tremble may find the condition annoying or embarrassing. Such tremors can worsen under stress, says Dr. Brown, and can be treated if they interfere with daily activities.

There are other diseases that share some of the symptoms of Parkinson's, but are not related to the depletion of dopamine, he said.

These "Parkinson's look-alikes" often include other symptoms that are not markers for Parkinson's, he says.



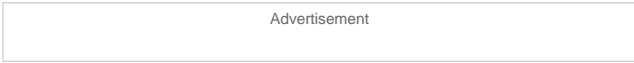
Search bar with options: Newspaper, UR Niagara, Archive Information, and a Search button.



The Parkinson Society of Canada, in partnership with more than 240 chapters and support groups, is dedicated to research, education, support and advocacy on behalf of over 100,000 Canadians living with Parkinson's, and is a useful resource for those living with the disease.

To learn more about Parkinson's and tremors, attend the InfoHealth session at the NOTL Public Library Wednesday, Feb. 8 at 2 p.m.

Previous InfoHealth sessions are available on DVD at the library. The monthly sessions are recorded by Cogeco and are available to view on Channel 10 Fridays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.



Article ID# 3456658

Tools    

Local News Articles:

- [Foundation hopes for public support to retain Regent Street oasis](#)
 - [Leaving behind a piece of history](#)
 - [Record-breaking season ends in red](#)
 - [Euchre parties a 60-year tradition—at least](#)
 - [Winemakers take to ice . . . er, dry land](#)
 - [Queen still crushing competition as greatest Canadian street](#)
 - [Learn how regional taxes are spent](#)
 - [Transit answers will be revealed, Lord Mayor promises](#)
 - [Smiling and stretching for fair fees](#)
 - [Questions of overflowing tires and safety concerns are answered](#)
- [More Local News »](#)