



FACT SHEET November 2011

About Parkinson's disease

- Described by Dr. James Parkinson in 1817 (British doctor).¹
- Parkinson's is a disorder of the brain.²
- When cells in the brain that normally produce a chemical called "dopamine" die, symptoms of Parkinson's appear.²
- Most common symptoms are: tremor (shaking); slowness in movements, muscle stiffness and problems with balance.
- Other symptoms may also occur for some people, such as fatigue, difficulties with speech and writing, sleep disorders, loss of sense of smell, depression and cognitive changes.
- Parkinson's will worsen over time; each person with Parkinson's is unique and may experience different symptoms.²
- Currently there is no cure for Parkinson's disease.
- Most people manage their symptoms through medication.
- Other interventions such as exercise programs and speech therapy can also help.
- A small percentage of people with Parkinson's may benefit from surgery (deep brain stimulation).
- Finding the right treatment as symptoms change over time is important and requires the expertise of specialized health-care professionals.
- A single cause for Parkinson's has not been identified. Researchers are studying many theories such as the role of genetics and environmental exposure.

About Parkinson's disease in Canada

- It is estimated that more than 100,000 Canadians have Parkinson's disease.^{2,3,4}
- This number is underestimated as there is no national population-based study on PD.
- Due to the aging baby boomer population, this number is expected to rise dramatically. The population aged 65 and over is predicted to rise over 30 years from 11.6% to 23.6%.
- Those diagnosed with Parkinson's under the age of 40 are referred to as "Young Onset."³
- The average age of diagnosis is 60 years.⁴
- The majority of those diagnosed are over the age of 65.⁵
- Parkinson's disease is not a normal part of aging³; but the incidence increases with age.⁵
- Direct costs for Parkinson's disease (hospital and physician care and drugs) total \$86.8 million.⁵

Parkinson Society Canada

- Since 1965, Parkinson Society Canada and its regional partners have been committed to providing education and support to Canadians living with Parkinson's every single day of the Parkinson's journey. Our advocacy efforts give voice to their concerns and needs.
- Since 1981, Parkinson Society Canada has invested approximately \$19.5 million in 385 research grants.
- Parkinson Society Canada funds innovative and novel projects that contribute to our growing knowledge of Parkinson's and positively affects the quality of life of Canadians living with Parkinson's. By investing in emerging young researchers, Parkinson Society Canada encourages continued growth and revitalization in the fields of Parkinson's research in Canada.

- Our National Information and Referral Centre provides credible, up-to-date information and resources on issues related to Parkinson's disease and care management in both English and French. We have recently expanded our resources to five other languages. Visit us at www.parkinson.ca or call 1-800-565-3000.
- Parkinson's Awareness Month takes place in April.
- Parkinson Society Canada actively advocates on behalf of people living with Parkinson's disease.
- Our Vision is a better life with a brighter future for Canadians living with Parkinson's today. A world without Parkinson's tomorrow.
- Parkinson Society Canada was instrumental in launching Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC) and plays an active role in seeking a national brain strategy and in securing funding for a national epidemiological study of neurological disease.
- NHCC is a collective of organizations that represent people with chronic, often progressive, neurological and/or neuromuscular diseases, disorders, conditions and injuries (brain conditions) in Canada.
- Parkinson Society Canada has adopted WHO's World Charter on Parkinson's disease that people with the disease have the right to:
 - Be referred to a doctor with a special interest in PD;
 - Receive an accurate diagnosis;
 - Access to support services;
 - Receive continuous care; and
 - Take part in managing the illness.
- Parkinson Society Canada will host the international Parkinson's community at the next World Parkinson Congress in October 2013 in Montreal.

About Parkinson SuperWalk

- Parkinson SuperWalk takes place every September in 90 communities across Canada, growing to 95 communities in September 2011.
- 14,000 participants took part in 2011, raising \$2.79 million
- The first walk took place in 1990 with seven walkers in Ontario.
- Since Parkinson SuperWalk began in 1990 with just seven walkers, Parkinson Society Canada has raised over \$25 million for education, support, research and advocacy on behalf of Canadians with Parkinson's.
- Funds raised from SuperWalk go to education, advocacy, research and support services.

References

¹ James Parkinson, *An Essay on the Shaking Palsy*, London 1817

² Progression of Parkinson's Disease Information Sheet

³ A Manual for People Living with Parkinson's Disease, Parkinson Society Canada

⁴ Parkinson's: The Facts, Parkinson Society Canada brochure

⁵ Parkinson's Disease: Social and Economic Impact, 2003, Health Canada and Parkinson Society Canada