

Parkinson's Disease and Exercise

FACT SHEET



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Why is exercise important for people with Parkinson's Disease?

From the early to late stages of PD, people can experience decreased walking, balance, and daily activities. Those who participate in regular exercise programs show improvements in many areas of day to day function and overall well-being including:

- Improved walking speed
- Improved activity tolerance
- Decreased fatigue
- Improved balance
- Improved strength
- Decreased depression
- Prevention of cardiovascular disease
- Better sleep at night
- Improved memory and thinking

What types of exercises are best for people with Parkinson's Disease?

There are 4 main types of exercise that people with PD should concentrate on

Aerobic Conditioning:

- Aerobic exercise performed for 30 minutes, 3-5 times per week at a moderate intensity
- Types of aerobic exercise can include walking on a treadmill or at a fast pace outdoors, stationary or outdoor cycling, dancing, swimming, jogging, or any activity that keeps your heart rate up for more than 10 minutes at a time.

Range of Motion:

- Daily stretching of key muscle groups affected by PD is related to improved walking and balance
- Focus on flexibility of the hip flexors, hamstrings, calf muscles, pectoralis (anterior chest muscles), and extension of the spine (or backwards bending)
- Stretch each muscle 2-3 times for 30-60 seconds each time



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Strengthening:

- Strengthening performed 2-3 times/wk can keep muscles strong that are important for walking, getting up from a chair or the floor, and climbing stairs
- Focus on large muscles of the back, legs, and calf's
- Perform at least one exercise for each muscle group for 8-12 repetitions and 1-3 sets

Balance Training:

- Balance training is important to prevent falls and possible injury from falls
- Activities such as Tai Chi, Tango dancing, and supervised balance retraining by a Physical Therapist can improve balance and decrease the risk of falls

When should someone with PD exercise?

To get the maximum benefit, people with PD should exercise when they are at their best in their medication cycles, or in an “on” state.

How much should someone with Parkinson's Disease exercise?

Since Parkinson's Disease is a progressive disorder, a lifelong commitment to exercise is important to maintain the benefits! Research has shown that the best benefits are achieved if the exercise program is challenging and performed at a high intensity as long as it is safe. Use the guidelines listed above and consult with a Physical Therapist to help design a program that will best fit your individual needs.

References

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