



**Dementia Live® Empowerment Tool for
Parkinson's Disease**

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that affects predominately dopamine-producing neurons in a specific area of the brain called substantia nigra. Symptoms generally develop slowly over years. The progression of symptoms is often a bit different from one person to another due to the diversity of the disease. People with PD may experience tremors, slowness of movement, limb rigidity, gait, and balance problems.

The cause of PD remains largely unknown. Although there is no cure, treatment options vary and include medications and surgery. While PD itself is not fatal, disease complications can be serious. Source: Parkinson's Foundation

It is now recognized that PD is much more than a motor disorder. Tremor, slowness, stiffness, and walking trouble are only part of the picture. Non-motor symptoms in Parkinson's Disease are common and affect cognition, mood, sleep, autonomic function, and sensory function. Source: American Parkinson Disease Association.

COGNITION

Approximately 50% of people with PD experience some form of cognitive impairment

- **Memory.** This is one of the most concerning symptoms of the disease for people with Parkinson's and their families and includes difficulty retrieving information from working memory. This impairs the ability to complete familiar tasks.
- **Attention.** Difficulty completing complex tasks due to the inability to concentrate.
- **Mental Processing.** Noticeable delay in responding to verbal or behavioral stimuli and completing tasks.
- **Hallucinations/Delusions-** experienced by up to 40% of persons with PD.
- **Problem Solving.** Trouble planning, organizing, and completing activities.
- **Language.** Difficulty with word-finding and talking under pressure or stress.

TIPS TO SUPPORT BRAIN HEALTH

- ✓ Encourage regular exercise
- ✓ Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- ✓ Avoid cigarettes and drink alcohol only in moderation
- ✓ Engage in "brain games"
- ✓ Maintain a regular sleep routine

TIPS FOR CARE PARTNERS

- ✓ Keep track of cognitive changes and report promptly to a health provider
- ✓ Exercise patience and be aware of unrealistic expectations
- ✓ Avoid using phrases like, “don’t you remember” or “I already told you”
- ✓ Support independence and avoid behaviors that promote learned helplessness (it’s an instinct to jump in and just do it yourself)
- ✓ Use reminiscence to inspire sharing of memories and life stories
- ✓ Offer reassurance during hallucinations vs arguing

MOOD

Parkinson’s can cause mood disturbances and impact how a person thinks and feels

- Apathy. Having a lack of motivation and interest in activities
- Anxiety. Uncontrollable worry
- Depression. Feelings of hopelessness and unrelenting sadness and loss
- Insomnia. Sleep deprivation affects mood, and mood disturbances affect sleep

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CARE PARTNERS

- ✓ Remain social with friends and loved ones to guard against isolation
- ✓ Maintain a low-stress environment
- ✓ Report new symptoms promptly to healthcare providers
- ✓ Avoid cigarettes and ensure no more than moderate alcohol consumption
- ✓ Build a support network
- ✓ Accept your limits and be aware of signs of burnout
- ✓ Be mindful of your own emotions- they are just as important as the person with PD

Sources:

<https://www.apdaparkinson.org/resources-support/for-caregivers/>

https://www.michaeljfox.org/sites/default/files/media/document/MJFF_cognition-guide_digital.pdf

<https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Symptoms/Non-Movement-Symptoms/Depression>

<https://www.parkinson.org/understanding-parkinsons/what-is-parkinsons>