

BRIGGS[®]

UNDERSTANDING
PARKINSON'S
DISEASE
PATIENT
EDUCATION
GUIDE

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Introduction to Understanding Parkinson's Disease

This Patient Education Guide is a tool designed to provide you with important information about Parkinson's Disease, sometimes referred to as PD for short.

The guide follows a question format – what is Parkinson's Disease, what are the signs or symptoms of PD, how is it diagnosed, how is it treated, etc. It provides answers to the most common questions and action items for your well-being.



Our goal is to further your knowledge about this disorder – to help you understand Parkinson's disease better. Knowledge is power, thus our hope is that the information in this guide will give you just that. The power to understand what is happening to you and to motivate you to seek diagnosis and treatment in a timely manner. Knowledge also provides comfort and reduces fear. That is indeed our intent with this guide.

Be well and stay healthy!

Understanding Parkinson's Disease

Patient Education Guide

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Purpose: This booklet is for informational purposes only and is not designed to replace your physician's advice or treatments. The information contained in this booklet may vary, depending on the laws in the state you live in.

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Research Resources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine (AMDA), National Institute of Aging (NIA)/National Institute of Health (NIH), Parkinson's Foundation, Michael J. Fox Foundation, Merck Manual.

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What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a slow progressive, degenerative disorder of the central nervous system (brain). A person with PD begins to show slower movement (the medical term for this is bradykinesia), muscle rigidity, tremors, unstable posture and gait. As you'll see in the coming chapters of this guide, PD worsens over time.

**PD is the fastest-growing brain disease.
Only Alzheimer's disease affects more people.**

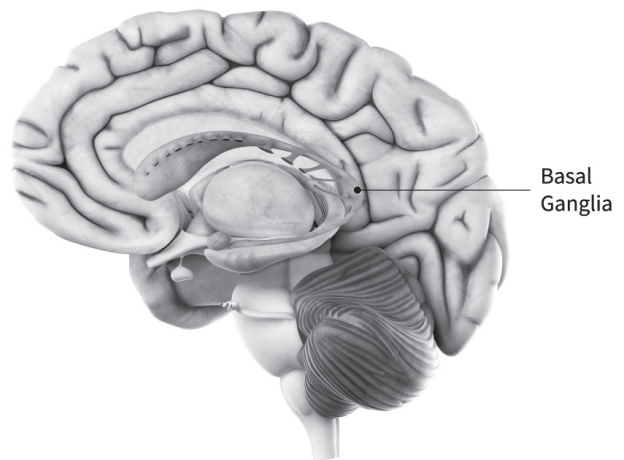
Currently, there are approximately 9.4 million people living with PD around the world. Compare that number to 6 million cases in the world in 2016 – some 5 years ago. One million people in the U.S. have PD with about 60,000 new cases diagnosed each year.

Parkinson's disease typically becomes apparent and is diagnosed in people in their 50s and 60s. It can be diagnosed earlier in life – before 50 years of age. When that happens, in about 5-10% of people, it's referred to as early onset PD.

Parkinson's disease itself is not fatal but other disease complications can cause death. Complications from PD is the 14th cause of death in the U.S. Such complications include falls, fractures, aspiration pneumonia and infections. PD can complicate the diagnosis, clinical course and recovery from other illnesses.

The rate at which PD progresses varies depending on the type, the person and physical/emotional stressors.

Parkinson's disease is caused by “nerve cells in the basal ganglia, an area of the brain that controls movement, become impaired and/or die. Normally, these nerve cells, or neurons, produce an important brain chemical known as dopamine. When the neurons die or become impaired, they produce less dopamine, which causes the movement problems of Parkinson's. Scientists still do not know what causes cells that produce dopamine to die.”¹



¹ NIA/NIH ... Parkinson's Disease

Nerve endings that produce norepinephrine are also damaged/lost with PD. Norepinephrine controls a person's heart rate and blood pressure. The loss of norepinephrine might help explain some of the non-movement features of Parkinson's, such as fatigue, irregular blood pressure, decreased movement of food through the digestive tract and sudden drop in blood pressure when a person stands up from a sitting or lying-down position. This information also comes from NIA/NIH.

The degeneration (death) of neurons in the brain also impact mood, with depression being a hallmark of the disease. Some people with PD also experience hallucinations (see things that aren't real), delusions (believe things that are not true) and cognitive changes that may include dementia. We'll talk more about symptoms in the next section as well as in the treatment and in the what you can do sections of this guide.



What are the Symptoms of Parkinson's Disease?

The 4 main symptoms, often called the cardinal signs, of PD are:

- **Slowing of movement** – walking (shuffling, dragging feet), standing, sitting, reaching, blinking, smiling, etc.
- **Stiffness** (rigidity) of the limbs (arms and legs) and trunk (body) – this is painful. Your face shows little or no expression.
- **Tremor** (trembling/shaking) of hands, arms, legs, jaw or head (this also includes tremors when the hand is at rest, rubbing your thumb and forefinger back and forth – called pill rolling).
- **Impaired posture** (stooping), **balance and coordination**, which can lead to falls.

It's important to remember that the symptoms of Parkinson's can be different for each person just as how quickly the disease progresses (worsens) differs among individuals.



This file is just a small sample of this booklet

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