



Symptoms of Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease has over 40 symptoms, including tremors, slowness of movement, rigidity, depression, fatigue, etc., but that does not mean you will experience all of them.

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What are motor and non-motor symptoms?

The signs and symptoms of Parkinson's that you may experience can broadly be divided into two groups called motor and non-motor symptoms. Motor symptoms are those related to your physical movement and which someone else can see. Non-motor symptoms are not related to movement and include hidden symptoms like [mental health issues, memory problems](#) and [pain](#).

What are the motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease?

Motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease are symptoms that affect movement. The three main motor symptoms are tremor, slowness of movement, and muscle stiffness (rigidity). There are a variety of other motor symptoms that you could experience, but it's unlikely you'll have all of them.

What are the main motor symptoms of Parkinson's?

They are:

- ★ **Tremor.** These are uncontrollable movements (shaking). They usually affect your hand or arm but can happen in other parts of the body like your jaw or leg. Tremors mostly start on one side of the body and usually occur when the affected body part is at rest.
- ★ **Slowness of movement (bradykinesia).** Slower movement that can make everyday tasks difficult, such as buttoning clothes and tying shoelaces, or walking after you've got up from your chair or bed.



- ★ **Muscle stiffness (rigidity).** Rigidity in Parkinson's disease causes stiffness in the muscles that create difficulties with movement such as swinging your arms or turning around in bed.

Doctors sometimes describe these main symptoms as parkinsonism. This is an umbrella term for a syndrome that includes Parkinson's as well as other conditions that can cause these symptoms.

What are other motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease?

Other Parkinson's symptoms that can affect your movement include:

- ★ Painful muscle cramps (dystonia).
- ★ Loss of balance (postural instability).
- ★ Problems with walking (gait). You may shuffle or drag your legs when walking or not be able to swing your arms as much.
- ★ Freezing. This happens when you may suddenly not be able to move forward for several seconds or minutes, as if your feet are glued to the ground.
- ★ Falls. Feeling off balance and having problems with walking and freezing means that falls are common in Parkinson's.
- ★ Speech problems. Your voice may become much quieter than before, or it could become slower or slurred.
- ★ Difficulty making facial expressions (hypomimia). This is sometimes called facial masking or masked face.
- ★ Problems with handwriting. Your writing may become much smaller (micrographia).



What are the non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease?

The non-motor-symptoms of Parkinson's are those symptoms that are not related to your movement. The fact that these symptoms do not affect movement does not make them any less important, and it's a good idea to become familiar with them so you can get help and advice. As with motor symptoms, you might not experience all of them.

Depression, anxiety and other emotional changes

Mental health problems can happen as a direct result of Parkinson's or because of the emotional upheaval of being diagnosed with the condition. Find out more about Parkinson's and [mental health, including hallucinations, delusions and impulse control problems.](#)

Drooling and difficulty swallowing or chewing

If you're having problems swallowing or chewing, this can lead to excessive saliva, or drooling. Finding it hard to eat and drink might also mean you're not getting enough healthy food or not drinking enough water. This can make other symptoms worse. Ask your healthcare provider or a support group for tips on how to overcome difficulties eating and drinking and let a loved one help you at mealtimes too.

Constipation or problems with weeing

You might find it hard to poo (pass stool) or you might go to the toilet less often than usual. Problems with weeing (passing urine) can include needing to get



up often in the night to wee or needing to wee urgently and not reaching the toilet in time (urinary incontinence).

Skin problems and sweating

Skin problems may include having scaly patches of skin (seborrheic dermatitis), oily skin or itchy and sore skin. You may also find you sweat too much or not enough.

Other non-motor symptoms

Other non-motor symptoms include:

- ★ Trouble remembering and thinking (cognitive difficulties).
- ★ Low blood pressure (orthostatic hypotension). This can cause dizziness or fainting.
- ★ Pain. This includes muscle aches, dystonia and shooting pain that travels down the arm or leg.
- ★ Reduced sense of smell. This can happen several years before other symptoms develop.
- ★ Restless leg syndrome (RLS), which is an overwhelming urge to move your legs.
- ★ Problems sleeping. Sleep disorders include difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep and can be caused by other Parkinson's symptoms including tremor, pain and RLS.
- ★ Tiredness and a lack of energy (fatigue) which can be caused by the disease or by having problems sleeping.
- ★ Problems with your sex life. These can also be caused by other symptoms like tiredness or depression.
- ★ Remember that Parkinson's affects everyone differently. It's unlikely you will experience all of these symptoms. Also, your symptoms can change



from day to day, and even from hour to hour. So, symptoms that may be noticeable one day may not be a problem the next.

Many can also be treated or managed with the right support, diet, exercise and any medication and therapies you can access. Read more about [diet](#), [exercise](#) and [treatment options](#), and find out if there's a [support group](#) that you can join.

Sources (all accessed May/June 2022):

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