



About Parkinson's Disease & April Awareness Month

Parkinson's Disease

- Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurological disorder with no known cure.
- There are over 17,500 people in British Columbia living with Parkinson's disease, and over 100,000 across Canada.
- Common motor symptoms include tremor (shaking), slowness of movement, muscle stiffness, and impaired balance. Other symptoms often include fatigue, speech and writing difficulties, sleep disorders, cognitive changes, and more.
- Parkinson's causes dopamine-producing cells to die off, resulting in the onset of motor symptoms. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter important for nervous system function.
- Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's. The worldwide incidence of Parkinson's is expected to double by 2040.
- Since there is no cure, treatment is focused on symptom management. Exercise and medication are the two most common ways to treat Parkinson's.
- Levodopa is a building-block of dopamine, and one of the most common drugs used to treat symptoms of Parkinson's. It stimulates dopamine production in the body.

Parkinson Society British Columbia

Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC) is a not-for-profit charitable organization that serves to empower people with Parkinson's in British Columbia by providing resources and services to enable self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy. The Society is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, and supported by donations from individuals, members, corporations, foundations, and the efforts of our volunteers.

Our services include:

- Educational materials for people with PD, their caregivers, and healthcare professionals.
- Free, short-term, confidential counselling and healthcare navigation services for anyone touched by Parkinson's.
- A virtual physiotherapy service offered at no cost to those who meet the criteria.
- Over 50 volunteer-led support groups in communities across the province, and online.
- PDLINK, a peer support program for individuals with PD and caregivers.
- Education events, including workshops, conferences, webinars, and community talks.
- PD Connect®, a referral program for healthcare professionals treating people with PD.
- Information, consultations, and referrals through our toll-free information line and email, including support in navigating the complexities of the healthcare system.

Some impactful highlights from the last several years include:

- An advocacy campaign, which resulted in the BC Ministry of Health hiring a second neurosurgeon in 2023 to perform Deep Brain Stimulation surgeries. Prior to this, the province only had one surgeon, resulting in substantial delays for individuals who needed this life-changing treatment.
- Advancing Parkinson's treatment through funding Allied Healthcare Professional pilot projects. This initiative has resulted in increased healthcare funding, improved Parkinson's treatment, and reduced strain on the healthcare system.
- The expansion of our Healthcare Navigator service. PSBC recognizes that the healthcare system can be very complex to navigate for many, especially those with chronic conditions. Since its

launch in 2022, we've expanded our healthcare navigation services, now integrated with counselling, to provide more comprehensive support to the PD community.

April Awareness Month

Every year, Parkinson Society British Columbia dedicates the month of April to raising awareness of the unique experiences of people with Parkinson's and the needs of our community. April Awareness Month is an opportunity to engage the public in expanding their understanding of Parkinson's and the profound effects it has on the lives of over 17,500 British Columbians living with the disease.

This April, we want to spread the message that Parkinson's is more than a tremor. The disease can affect all aspects of one's life, and there is no cure.

Our 2024 campaign highlights:

- **Personal journeys** shared by people with Parkinson's, their families, and carepartners.
- The importance of **living well with Parkinson's**, through self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.
- **Community ties and peer support** bringing together the Parkinson's community across British Columbia.

In recognition of Parkinson's Awareness Month, and World Parkinson's Day on April 11, we are encouraging individuals affected by the disease to share their experiences through our **#MoreThanATremor** campaign. While most people have heard of Parkinson's disease, the breadth of symptoms experienced, and ripple effect the disease has on friends, family, and the healthcare system, are lesser understood. With approximately 17,500 people affected by the condition, Parkinson's is the second most common neurological disorder after Alzheimer's - yet it receives considerably less attention.

Community partners and Parkinson's support groups across the province are supporting Parkinson's Awareness Month and our **#MoreThanATremor** campaign in many ways, including:

- lighting up landmarks at various monuments and structures across the province in a mid-tone blue, in collaboration with the PD Avengers' "Spark the Night" project, which is seeking to symbolize solidarity and spread awareness on a global scale
- providing sponsorship and in-kind donations of advertising space and helping us spread the word about our campaign on social media

What else can you do to help the Parkinson's community in BC?

- **Share** our April Awareness campaign and use the hashtag **#MoreThanATremor**.
- **Fill out** our Digital Postcard about your Parkinson's experience, or **submit your original content** telling your story, your way.
- **Learn** about Parkinson's disease, its symptoms, and treatments.
- **Fundraise** for Parkinson Society BC by hosting your own community event.
- **Volunteer** at education and fundraising events hosted by Parkinson Society BC.
- **Advocate** for improved patient outcomes by joining our network of Advocacy Ambassadors.
- **Participate** in a research study as a person with Parkinson's, or a control subject.

To learn more about this year's campaign, please visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/awareness.