

SPECIAL NOTICE

In response to the global outbreak of COVID-19, Parkinson Society BC staff are working remotely until further notice. We will continue to offer programs and services in alternate formats. For the most up-to-date information, please visit this PSBC web page: www.parkinson.bc.ca/coronavirus. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@parkinson.bc.ca.

STAY SAFE, STAY HOME: Staying connected during COVID-19

Social isolation among older adults is a significant public health concern across the globe. An estimated 30% of seniors in Canada are at risk of becoming socially isolated (Government of Canada, 2017). People with Parkinson’s, as well as carepartners, may be particularly vulnerable as a result of many compounding factors that make social connection, mobility, and community engagement more challenging.

With seniors among those most likely to develop serious complications from COVID-19, now is a crucial time to maintain strong relationships and support networks, in order to prevent those most at risk from becoming isolated while practicing physical distancing. **Suggestions for avoiding isolation during this difficult time are provided at the end of this article.**

What is social isolation?

Social isolation results from a lack of meaningful interaction in one’s life. Unlike loneliness, which is a subjective feeling, social isolation can be identified objectively by observing one’s relationships and connections. Those who spend little time with loved ones, friends, neighbours, and community groups may be isolated, and at risk for poorer physical and mental health.

In a report on seniors’ isolation, the National Seniors Council (2014) noted the following risk factors for becoming isolated and/or lonely:

- living alone
- being age 80 or older
- having compromised health status
- having multiple chronic health problems
- having no children or contact with family
- lacking access to transportation
- living with low income
- changing family, neighbourhood, and community structures
- loss of sense of community
- location of residence, such as rural areas, assisted living facilities, or low-income neighbourhoods
- critical life transitions, such as retirement, death of a spouse, or losing a driver’s license
- lacking awareness of or access to community services and programs
- being a caregiver
- lack of awareness or access to community services and programs
- fear, stigma, or ageist attitudes
- challenges related to technology, including access, costs, literacy, and comfort with telephone systems, computers, social media, and others

The risk of isolation grows with more of these factors present. Those who are part of marginalized communities may also be at further risk, due to discrimination and lack of access to necessary social supports and services throughout their lifetime. Those who are Aboriginal, immigrants, people of

colour, LGBTQ+, disabled, low-income, or with lower education levels may find it more difficult to find communities, programs, and social activities that are welcoming and accessible to them.

The effects of isolation

Social isolation can present a serious issue for the health, safety, and mental wellbeing of seniors. A strong sense of community, and a tight-knit support network, are significant determinants of health. Some of the consequences of social isolation may include (NSC, 2014; Nicholson, 2012):

- increased risk of falls, injury, hospitalization, and premature death
- reduced sense of wellbeing
- onset or worsening of depression
- worsening condition of chronic disease
- increased use of healthcare and supportive services
- reduced quality of life
- caregiver burden and burnout
- poor overall mental and general health

Studies show that a weak support network is also associated with a 60% increase in risk of cognitive decline and dementia (Fratiglioni et al., 2000). Many isolated seniors are also at risk of developing unhealthy behaviours and coping strategies, such as drinking, smoking, and being sedentary. They may also be more likely to face elder abuse, including financial abuse, crime, and theft, particularly when living alone.

Isolation, social distancing, & self-quarantine

During these unprecedented times, seniors are at an even higher risk of social isolation due to the measures in place to protect them from contracting the coronavirus. In fact, the COVID-19 outbreak presents challenges even for those at the lowest risk of isolation. Roughly 80% of Canadian seniors participate in social activities at least monthly (Government of Canada, 2014).

The cancellation or postponement of programs for recreation, faith groups, volunteering, and other activities can significantly limit seniors' means of social connection. Minimizing non-essential interactions has also meant that seniors are missing out on interactions with their neighbours, local business employees, home and community care workers, and others who play a role in their community network.

Even as the provincial government begins to relax physical distancing measures, it is difficult to estimate when we may expect to return to a normal way of life. This uncertainty can cause stress and anxiety, and exacerbate pre-existing mental health issues. For those who face social isolation during the COVID-19 outbreak, but have otherwise healthy social connections, these mental health changes may make it challenging to readjust to their previous routines and relationships.

Research shows that seniors with mental health conditions tend to become isolated due to feelings of discomfort, shame, or anxiety around other people. This contributes to further isolation as social skills decrease due to disuse and psychological changes (Segrin et al., 2008).

Preventing isolation during COVID-19

Face-to-face interactions with our friends and family are difficult to replace with phone calls, messaging, and video chats, but it is important to prioritize these means of communication during this time. Although BC is moving towards loosening physical distancing measures, the

risk of contracting the coronavirus, especially as a senior and/or a person with Parkinson's, remains high. It is important to continue focusing on our health and safety, even though it may be tempting to be near our loved ones.

Here are some suggestions on how you can avoid isolation while maintaining a safe distance:

- *Share your routines:* Schedule phone or video calls with your loved ones, during which you can do activities together. Try chatting while you cook or eat meals, do puzzles, watch TV shows and movies, or exercise. You can also pick up new hobbies together, or set up your own book club!
- *Find meaning:* It can be difficult to work around busy schedules and engage with loved ones very frequently. If you find yourself unable to spend as much time with others you would like, it can be comforting to find meaning in being alone. Pick up a hobby, look through photo albums, listen to music, or watch movies that bring you joy. Any activity you do can be turned into a mindfulness practice, or a time for rest and relaxation. Although it is valuable to feel productive and busy during this time, it is also important to allow yourself to feel boredom, and be at peace with it.
- *Serve others:* The Government of Canada (2014) reports that roughly 36% of seniors do some form of volunteer work. This kind of community engagement is a valuable form of social connection. You can continue to stay active in your community in small ways, like checking in on your neighbours, and if you're able, helping others with errands and groceries. If you are part of a support group for people with Parkinson's or carepartners, try holding meetings by video chat, or staying connected over the phone.
- *Be open and accept help:* Vulnerability and trust are parts of an important foundation for meaningful relationships. Be honest with your loved ones about how you are feeling, and allow them to help you through this unprecedented time. It is normal to feel uncomfortable asking for help, but you may find that it serves to strengthen your social connections.

Additional resources

Counselling | www.parkinson.bc.ca/counselling

Achieving Physical Distancing and Avoiding Social Isolation | <https://youtu.be/bp9fEWmLjtU>

Maintaining your mental wellbeing during COVID-19 | www.parkinson.bc.ca/mental-health-covid19

The Hobby Series | www.parkinson.bc.ca/covid19-hobby-series

Mental Health & Parkinson's Disease | <http://bit.ly/pdmentalhealth>

COVID-19: Coping with Stress | Centres for Disease Control | <https://bit.ly/36Ayv8e>

Social Isolation Q&A with Lakelyn Hogan | Home Instead Senior Care | <https://bit.ly/2ztEmjD>

The information provided by Parkinson Society BC is intended to be used for general information only, and should not replace consultation with healthcare professionals. For medical advice, please contact your family doctor, or speak to a nurse at HealthLink BC by dialling 8-1-1. In the event of an emergency, call 9-1-1.

Sources

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- Keefe, J. et al. (2006). Final Report: A Profile of Social Isolation in Canada. Submitted to the Chair of the F/P/T Working Group on Social Isolation. Retrieved from www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2006/keefe_social_isolation_final_report_may_2006.pdf
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- Nicholson, N.R. (2012). A Review of Social Isolation: An Important but Underassessed Condition in Older Adults. *Primary Prevention*. 33 (2-3). Retrieved from: doi.org/10.1007/s10935-012-0271-2.
- Segrin, C. & Givertz, M. (2008). Methods of Social Skills Training and Development: Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills.
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UPCOMING EVENTS – Exercise & Mindful Movement Programs

Please note: Participation in the exercise programs below will be done at your own risk within your home. Please ensure you are wearing proper footwear, and have the space needed to follow the exercises with no obstacles or barriers in your way.

Parkinson Society BC (PSBC) will not be held liable for accidents or incidents that may occur in your home. By participating in the exercise programs listed below, you are recognizing that risk of illness and/or injury may be inherent in any movement or exercise class and are participating with the express agreement of, and understanding that PSBC and its directors, officers, employees, partners, and agents are hereby released from any and all claims, costs, liabilities, expenses, or judgements associated with these exercise for Parkinson's programs.

Modern Dance Series

Discover your body's innate ability to move with physiotherapist and dancer, Shelly Yu, and Continuum dancer, Denise Mullen. We invite you to join this 4-week modern dance series, exploring dance as a form of mindful movement.

Shelly and Denise will guide you through the somatic approach in dance, a technique of drawing attention to the body's physical sensations and responding through movement. This form of dance emphasizes the feeling behind bodily movement. This class will focus on strengthening the mind-body connection to create movements through thoughts, emotions, and memories.

Each week will emphasize a different approach to modern dance:

- Week 1: Mind-Body Connection
- Week 2: Building on the Small Dance
- Week 3: Dancing through Gravity and Sensation
- Week 4: Improvisation

No experience with dance is necessary. People with Parkinson's and carepartners are all welcome to join, regardless of physical ability.

Dates: Mondays, June 1, 8, 15, & 22
Time: 4:00pm – 4:45pm
Cost: Free
Registration: www.parkinson.bc.ca/modern-dance

Morning Pilates with Shelly

Join neuro physiotherapist and trained Pilates instructor, Shelly Yu, for four weeks of morning Pilates! Pilates is a great low-impact form of exercise, which can help improve mobility, posture, and balance, and reduce fall risk.

This series is offered at two levels. **Please register for the level that best suits your physical ability.** Level 1 is an adapted class focused on sitting and lying positions, while Level 2 features standing and lying exercises. To join the waitlist, visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/pilates-with-shelly.

Level 1

This series will explore gentle but challenging movements in sitting and lying positions. Level 1 is an adapted class, and will not include any standing.

The class will start sitting at the edge of the bed, followed by lying on the bed. Ideally, participants should be able to lie on their back and side. No previous experience is required.

Equipment needed for the class includes a bed (a couch/sofa is acceptable, although your movements may be restricted), pillows, a long towel or scarf, and if needed, a loved one to help with transferring from sitting to lying.

Date: Tuesdays, May 26, June 2, 9, & 16
Time: 10:30am – 11:15am
Cost: Free

Level 2

Level 2 of this series will explore both static and dynamic stability exercises in both standing and lying positions.

These exercises require participants to be able to stand independently (with or without a gait aid), get on/off the floor, and be able to lie on their back, side, and front.

No equipment is needed for the class, other than a mat to lie on. If no mat is available, participants can lie on carpet, or use towels to cushion their bodies against the floor.

Date: Thursdays, May 28, June 4, 11, & 18
Time: 10:30am – 11:15am
Cost: Free

Dancing and Moving with Megan

Join Megan Walker-Straight, Dance for PD[®] affiliated instructor, for an hour of movement with music. This 4-week series will use the fundamentals of dance to work on balance, flexibility, movement sequencing, and spatial awareness.

No dance experience necessary. Exercises in this session can be completed seated in a chair (preferably without armrests), or standing.

Dates: Mondays, June 29, July 6, 13, & 20
Time: 10:00am – 11:00am
Cost: Free
Registration: www.parkinson.bc.ca/dance-with-megan

Move with Shelly

Join Parkinson Society British Columbia's own Education and Support Services Coordinator, and neuro physiotherapist, Shelly Yu, for a fun and energetic online Parkinson's exercise class, designed to challenge your strength, balance, and mobility, to improve your overall daily function and quality of life. **Please register for the level that best suits your physical ability.** To register, please visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/move-with-shelly-2.

Level 1

This class is suitable for those who prefer a slower-paced class. All exercises will be completed in a sitting position. No equipment is needed, other than a chair to sit in.

Date: Thursdays, June 4, 11, 18, 25, & July 2
 Time: 3:00pm – 4:00pm
 Cost: Free

Level 2

This class will consist of standing exercises, with some dual-tasking challenges. Adaptations will be provided for those who require a walker, cane, or other support. No equipment is needed.

Date: Tuesdays, June 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30
 Time: 3:00pm – 4:00pm
 Cost: Free

Hand & Dexterity Exercise Series

Join physiotherapist, Shelly Yu, for an exercise series focused on hand and dexterity challenges associated with Parkinson's disease.

Exercises in this series will target upper extremity movement, hand dexterity, grip strength, hand-finger coordination, and overall arm function. As this is a hand and dexterity class, all exercises will be done in a seated position – ideally in a chair without armrests.

Equipment needed for this exercise series includes:

- . A small tea or kitchen towel
- . A small cushion/pillow

Dates: Thursdays, July 9, 16, 23, & 30
 Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm
 Cost: Free
 Register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/hand-dexterity-series

UPCOMING EVENTS – Educational Webinars & Online Workshops**Online Improv Workshop Series**

Join us for an online improv series for people with Parkinson's, hosted by Dan Dumsha! Sessions will include exercises to help foster skills for listening, spontaneity, teamwork, and being in the present moment. This series aims to help participants overcome the barriers of anxiety, fear, and overthinking by teaching skills to help let go of expectations to be able to live in the moment. Through improv games, participants will improve their communication abilities and their creativity and confidence while also being encouraged to discover the joys in collaborating with others. To register, please visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/improv-series.

Level 1

This 6-session series will run as a cohort, with a 75-minute online workshop running every Monday. No experience necessary.

Date: Wednesdays, June 3, 10, 17, & 24,
July 8 & 15

Time: 11:00am – 12:15pm

Cost: Free

Level 2

This 6-session series will run as a cohort, with a 90-minute online workshop running every Friday. Some prior experience with improv is required to participate.

Date: Fridays, June 5, 12, 19, & 26,
July 3 & 10

Time: 11:00am – 12:30pm

Cost: Free

Ask the Expert Webinar: Communication & Swallowing

Join Sherri Zelazny, MA RSLP CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist, Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT)[®] certified clinician, and Parkinson Society BC Board member, for an educational hour about communication and swallowing difficulties that are typical with Parkinson's disease. You will learn about how to identify signs and symptoms of communication and swallowing problems, and best practices for evaluation and treatment.

Sherri will also provide a brief introduction to voice therapy training that is part of the LSVT LOUD[®] treatment, which includes methods that have been clinically proven to enhance communication for individuals with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions.

This session will close with a 10-15 minute question and answer period.

Date: Friday, June 5

Time: 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Cost: Free

Registration: www.parkinson.bc.ca/cs-webinar

Ask the Expert Webinar: Driving with Parkinson's

Driving is an important part of daily life for many people. A Parkinson's disease (PD) diagnosis may lead to a number of questions around driving, such as whether people with Parkinson's can continue to drive safely, what a driving evaluation or assessment may look like, and what options for transportation exist for someone who no longer feels safe driving.

On June 8, Kathryn McCall, registered occupational therapist, joins Parkinson Society BC to answer these questions, and more, about driving with PD.

Date: Monday, June 8

Time: 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Cost: Free

Registration: www.parkinson.bc.ca/driving-webinar

Parkinson's Medication Webinar Series

Pharmacist, Amy Tran leads this four-part webinar series, covering Parkinson's medication, including self-management, side effects, and drug interactions. Amy believes in empowering people with Parkinson's by providing education to support patients in managing their medication

between healthcare appointments. Each webinar in this series will cover the complexities of each Parkinson's medication, to support you in better self-managing and self-advocating.

Please note that separate registration is required for each session. To register, please visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/medication-webinar-series. All sessions are free to attend.

Dopamine Agonists, MAO-B Inhibitors, and More

Friday, June 12 | 2:00pm – 3:00pm

In this webinar, Amy will discuss the wide range of medications used to treat Parkinson's alongside levodopa, such as dopamine agonists like rotigotine and pramipexole, and MAO-B inhibitors like selegiline, rasagiline, and safinamide. Side effects will also be covered.

Medication Management

Friday, June 26 | 2:00pm – 3:00pm

No two people with Parkinson's will experience the same symptoms. As a result, medications need to be specifically adjusted to suit every patient's needs. It is important to understand each of your medications' function, dosing, side effects, drug interactions, and "on" and "off" periods. This webinar covers what to expect from your medications in order to effectively self-manage.

Medications for Insomnia

Friday, July 3 | 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Insomnia is common in Parkinson's, and can be caused by dream-enacting behaviours, restlessness from motor fluctuations, or as a side effect of Parkinson's drugs. This webinar explores different medications that can be used to treat insomnia, including over-the-counter and prescription options. Side effects, as well as non-drug measures, will also be covered.

SongShine with Joani

Join us for six weeks of SongShine – music for your body and soul! This program harnesses the power of the brain, breath, and emotion to reclaim voices. Joani Bye will engage participants in six uplifting sessions of music therapy-based signing intervention classes aimed at improving communication for those facing challenges due to Parkinson's or other neurological challenges. SongShine's goal is to help you communicate more easily and clearly, while facilitating a sense of community, camaraderie, and confidence in the process!

Dates: Tuesdays, June 16, 23, & 30, & July 7, 14, & 21

Time: 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Cost: Free

Registration: www.parkinson.bc.ca/songshine-with-joani

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Champions for Parkinson's

- IMPACT Parkinson's: Ongoing event proceeds (see events: impactparkinsons.com)
- Donate a Car Canada: Ongoing (read more: bit.ly/2ORTuJn)
- Naturally Urban Pet Food Delivery Sales: Ongoing (read more: bit.ly/2MLasvX)

We're looking for more Champions!

Do you want to help fund research, grow support networks, and improve quality of life for those living with Parkinson's? Become a Champion for Parkinson's and plan your own independent community fundraising event! Contact Caroline Wiggins at cwiggins@parkinson.bc.ca or 1-800-668-3330.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

COVID-19 Survey on Education & Support Services

Parkinson Society British Columbia is committed to empowering our community with the resources you need to live well during this difficult time. We invite you to share your feedback in a brief survey, which will help inform our ongoing response to COVID-19.

This survey aims to measure the effectiveness of our current online programs and services, and gather suggestions on ways we can better support you through the COVID-19 outbreak.

Take the survey at www.airtable.com/shrcIRZFxLBC7YUSP.

YOPD Support Group Talks

Mark your calendars for two upcoming talks at our Young Onset Parkinson's disease online support group, with Parkinson Society BC's own neuro physiotherapist, Shelly Yu, and clinical counsellor, Tricia Wallace!

On June 9, Shelly will join us to discuss exercising for life, and on July 7, Tricia will speak on social anxiety and Parkinson's. For more information, contact support group facilitator, Alana Dhillon, at adhillon@parkinson.bc.ca.

Parkinson SuperWalk in British Columbia is going virtual!

At Parkinson Society BC, we are inspired every day by the strength and resilience of our community. Together, we are united in our commitment to the advocacy, research, and fundraising efforts that are bringing us closer to a future without Parkinson's disease. We invite you to join us and champion the cause again this year, for the 30th annual Parkinson SuperWalk.

We are adapting to the new normal this year by bringing you an engaging virtual SuperWalk experience, with walk weekend taking place September 12th and 13th. As we continue to practice physical distancing for the health and safety of our communities, the event will help us carry on providing the programs, support services, educational resources, and advocacy that people with Parkinson's, their families, and carepartners rely on.

This summer, you can take part in our monthly exercise and fundraising challenges leading up to SuperWalk's opening ceremonies, which will be live-streamed on Saturday, September 12th.

Stay tuned at www.parkinson.bc.ca/superwalk. Our SuperWalk website opens for registration on June 1st. We hope you'll join us!

Take the 10 Day Exercise Challenge!

Did you miss registering for our self-directed 10 Day Challenge exercise program? The full video series is now available on our website at www.parkinson.bc.ca/10-day-challenge, along with instructions for seated modifications of every exercise! Each 5-minute video introduces a new exercise that you can incorporate into your daily routine to work on arm and leg coordination, as well as balance, strength, and power.