

STIFFNESS AND SLOW MOVEMENT IN PARKINSON'S

In Parkinson's disease (PD), the messages sent from your brain to your muscles are not processed properly. As a result, your muscles can become stiff (rigid), and your movement may be slow and clumsy (known as bradykinesia). Your muscles, particularly those in your neck, shoulders, and calves, can become sore or cramp up.

Stiffness and slowness of movement may cause you to walk with short, shuffling steps, and you may find it takes you longer to perform tasks. You may even experience a lack of coordination. Stiffness can stop muscles from stretching and relaxing, causing rigid, inflexible muscles, pain and cramps, and reduced facial expression (the "PD Mask"). Untreated, this stiffness can affect your mobility and safety. Fortunately, drug treatment can be very effective, especially when combined with regular stretching and exercise. Here are a few suggestions for enhancing your flexibility and movement:

- Follow your doctor's recommendations for drug treatment and exercise.
- Continue any exercise you currently enjoy, but be mindful of your limits.
- Adapt activities to your current ability. For example, try doubles tennis rather than singles, or cross country skiing rather than downhill. If golf is your game, continue to play even if you can't complete a full round.
- Seek the advice of a physiotherapist who can assess your safety, mobility, and stamina. A therapist can recommend exercise and stretching programs that can be done at home or in the community.
- Start an exercise program slowly to build your stamina and self-confidence. A regular walking routine is excellent exercise for PD.
- Massage and local applications of heat or ice can provide temporary relief for stiff and sore muscles.

Additional Resources

Exercise & Active Living | Parkinson Society BC | bit.ly/pdexerciseprograms

—

Source: *Pacific Parkinson's Research Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver*