

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Virtual Open House** | May 2
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/OpenHouseReg-23>
- **Rock Steady Boxing with Doug** | Tuesdays, May 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/rocksteady2-23>
- **DOPABEATS with Doug Pickard** | Wednesdays, May 3 & 10
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/dopa2-23>
- **SongShine with Joani** | Thursdays, May 4, 11, & 18
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/songshine2-23>
- **May Symposium Series**
 - **Skin Changes** | May 4
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/MaySymp1-23>
 - **Bladder and Bowel Issues** | May 17
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/MaySymp2-23>
- **Voice Aerobics** | Tuesdays, May 9, 16, & 23
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/voiceaerobics-23>
- **Rhythm in Motion** | Thursdays, May 11, 18, 25, & June 1
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/rhythm-23>
- **Caregiving Series**
 - **Strategies for Working Well with Healthcare Providers** | May 8
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/careseries1-23>
 - **Balancing 'Duty to Care' with 'Dignity of Risk' Panel Talk** | May 16
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/careseries2-23>
 - **Self-Compassion and Taking Care of Yourself** | May 25
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/careseries3-23>
- **Communication and Swallow** | Saturday, May 27
Learn more & register: parkinson.bc.ca/comm-swallow23
- **PD Warrior (Kelowna)** | Saturday, June 10
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/pdwarrior-kel23>
- **Popping for Parkinson's** | Mondays, August 21, 28, September 4, 11, & 18
Learn more & register: <https://bit.ly/popforPD-23>

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS***Champions for Parkinson's***

- Donate a Car Canada: Ongoing (read more: <http://bit.ly/2ORTuJn>)

We are 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 disease (PD)? Become a Champion for Parkinson's and plan your own independent community fundraising event! Contact us at events@parkinson.bc.ca or 1-800-668-3330.

Upgrade your glasses or shades at Soul Eyewear

[Soul Eyewear](#) (Kelowna) will be supporting the Society by increasing awareness of Parkinson's disease in store and donating 10% of its total sales for the month of April.

Brighten the day with a bouquet from Callia Flowers

From now until May 21, [Callia Flowers](#) is offering Parkinson Society BC's (PSBC) community members a \$5 discount on any order they place using the code: PARKINSONBC. Additionally, 10% of the net sales using the code will be donated back to PSBC.

Register now for Full Throttle

This fundraising event, led by long-time PSBC supporter, Jim Smerdon, brings together car and motorcycle enthusiasts. Join the scenic ride from Vancouver to Squamish on Sunday, May 28. Funds raised from this event will benefit PSBC's programs, services, advocacy efforts, and contributions to research for the 15,000 British Columbians living with Parkinson's disease. Learn more, register, and donate on the [website](#).

TIP JAR

The Tip Jar is where we share advice from Parkinson's community members on a wide range of topics from daily lifestyle hacks to safety. This month we share a tip on travelling!

When travelling by plane, pick an aisle seat, if possible. This will make it easier to get in and out of the seat and stretch and move limbs when needed during the flight.

Do you have any tips or tricks that you would like to share with the Parkinson's community? These can be tips from something that works well, to eating and dressing, to getting out of bed or travelling! All tips and tricks are welcome! Please share your ideas at info@parkinson.bc.ca.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

May is Family Caregiver Month

Family Caregiver Month is an opportunity to honour and appreciate family caregivers who provide essential care for their loved ones with Parkinson's. Family caregivers play a critical role in the management of PD, helping their loved ones with daily tasks, medication management, and emotional support. Parkinson Society BC is dedicated to raising awareness of the challenges faced by family caregivers, as well as providing resources and support to help them in their role.

PDLink volunteers wanted

Interested in mentoring and giving back within the Parkinson's community? PDLink is a peer-to-peer support program for people with PD and their carepartners. We are seeking volunteers who are carepartners, or have had PD for several years, who would like to mentor others about Parkinson's. To learn more about the program, visit the [PDLink webpage](#). If interested, contact Liz Janze at ljanze@parkinson.bc.ca.

DISCUSSION TOPIC: **Speech and Hearing**

Discussion Questions

1. How has Parkinson's affected your speech and hearing abilities, and how have you adapted to these changes in your daily life?
2. What strategies have you found helpful in improving your communication with family, friends, and healthcare professionals?

3. Have you sought out any specialized therapies or treatments for speech and hearing issues related to Parkinson's? What has been your experience with these treatments?

Communication is a fundamental part of our lives that allows us to convey emotions, socialize, work, and fulfill our basic needs. Unfortunately, speech and communication difficulties are among the most common non-motor symptoms experienced by people with Parkinson's disease, affecting up to 89% of individuals with the condition (*Speech Therapy and PD*, n.d.). Studies have also found that people with Parkinson's (PwP) are more likely to have hearing loss compared to those without PD. Early in the disease, individuals may have trouble projecting their voice, and as the disease progresses, communication challenges become more pronounced. Speech and hearing difficulties associated with PD include frozen jaw, tongue, and lips, slurred speech, soft voice, monotone speech, and impaired articulation. Moreover, PD motor symptoms, such as decreased facial expression, slowness, and stooped posture, can exacerbate communication difficulties by conveying incorrect nonverbal cues. Cognitive problems, including finding the right words or having slower thought processes, may also compound communication challenges (*Speech & Swallowing Problems*, n.d.). These symptoms can cause individuals with PD to avoid social interactions and become less confident in conversations, negatively impacting quality of life (*Treating Speech Disorders in Patients with Parkinson's Disease*, n.d.). It is important to note, however, that not all people with PD develop these symptoms, as everyone is unique.

Causes of Speech and Hearing Issues

Communication difficulties in PD are described as *hypokinetic dysarthria*, which refers to impaired speech production due to disturbances in muscular control of the voice and speech mechanism. The impacted motor system of people with Parkinson's disease is one of the primary reasons for changes in speech and hearing. Muscle activation problems cause slow movement (bradykinesia) and small movements (hypokinesia) in the limbs, which also affect speech muscles, leading to reduced breath support, vocal loudness, and clarity of speech. Sensory processing changes related to speech also cause voice impairment in PD, making it

difficult for individuals to realize their speech is becoming softer and less clear (*Speech & Swallowing Problems*, n.d.).

Hearing problems in PD are not directly caused by the disease but are associated with aging. Poor hearing seriously interferes with communication, and when compounded with the difficulties PwP have with their speaking, can significantly diminish the quality of communication interaction. Noise, certain medications, and age can contribute to permanent hearing loss. Most types of hearing loss can be treated effectively with hearing aids. If you suspect a hearing loss or are the spouse or caregiver of a PwP, it is essential to seek professional consultation with an audiologist, who specializes in hearing evaluation and treatment.

Communication Evaluation

The [Radboud Oral Motor Inventory for Parkinson's disease \(ROMP\)](#) is a self-assessment tool to evaluate perceived problems with speech, swallowing, and saliva control in individuals with PD or atypical Parkinsonism. This can be used to identify initial concerns or monitor any changes. Pay attention to signs of communications problems, such as the following:

- Difficulty participating in conversation
- Frequent need for repetition
- Increased frustration with communication
- Decreased desire to participate in social activities
- Decreased effectiveness in the workplace
- Decreased desire to answer the phone
- Decreased ability to express wants and needs

Share your results with your physician and healthcare team to help facilitate the appropriate support. We recommend completing the ROMP every six months to a year or whenever you think there has been a change in your drooling, communication, or swallowing. It is a good idea to keep copies of previously completed ROMPs for comparison.

Speech Therapy

For individuals with PD, effective communication plays a crucial role in enhancing their quality of life and boosting their self-image and self-assurance. Various treatments are available to manage speech and hearing difficulties in PD, including medication and deep brain stimulation, but speech therapy has been shown to be the most effective. Speech therapy involves working with a speech-language pathologist (SLP) to improve your voice volume, articulation, and intonation. If you are experiencing any changes in your speech or voice, contact your primary healthcare provider, who can help find a SLP in your local area. You can ask for a referral and a prescription for a speech evaluation and treatment (*Speech Therapy and PD*, n.d.).

It is recommended to start working on your speech and voice early, even if changes have been minimal, as early intervention can be preventative. SLPs trained in working with Parkinson's patients, such as those who use the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment or Parkinson Voice Project SPEAK OUT! can provide specialized care, including memory-building exercises for cognitive issues. They can also teach techniques to conserve energy, use non-verbal communication skills, and introduce assistive devices and techniques to improve communication. Their recommended exercises can also help improve muscle strength and movements needed to enhance speech and communication (Ramig et al., 2008).

Tips to Improve Communication

Apart from speech therapy, individuals with PD who struggle with speech and hearing difficulties can utilize tips and tricks regularly to ease their interactions with others (Tjaden, 2008). Here are some that can help improve communication:

- Exaggerate. Speak slower and louder than you think to get your message across.
- Choose a quiet, low-noise space if possible. Turn off televisions, radios, and other devices that create noise when more attention is required.
- Ensure face-to-face conversations where the listener can clearly see you. This increases the ability to be understood.

- Plan periods of vocal rest before planned conversations or phone calls. Remember that fatigue significantly impacts the ability to speak.
- Choose the best time to communicate. “On” periods (when medication is working optimally) can be a better time to have a conversation.
- Stay hydrated. Avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol, which can dry out your throat.
- Keep an upright posture, straight chin, and slightly lifted neck to improve airflow from lungs to vocal cords.
- If you can write without difficulty, always carry a paper and pen as a backup to write down what you are trying to say.
- Tap into other ways to communicate like gesturing, changing tone, and using engagement cues. Use gestures for commonly recognized words while saying the word. For example, palm facing forward for stop.
- Participate in voice activities such as singing, acting, and reading aloud.
- Consider joining group speech therapy, which can be beneficial in improving communication skills. (Contact PSBC for a list of BC providers.)

By incorporating these tips into daily life, PwP can improve communication abilities and maintain quality of life (*Improving Communication in Patients with Parkinson’s Disease*, 2020).

Tips for the Listener

Difficulties in communication can be a frustrating experience for both the person with PD and their family, friends, and carepartners/caregivers. Be mindful that communication is a partnership and both parties carry the responsibility to make the interaction successful (Fried-Oken et al., 2015). To stay closely connected and ease speaking and communication difficulties, here are some tips for carepartners, friends, and family of PwP to learn new and different ways to communicate:

- Focus your attention. Make eye contact, pay attention to body language, and encourage the person with PD to speak loudly.

- Slow your pace. You may be a person who naturally speaks very quickly. If this is the case, you may need to slow down to the point where you are closer to the pace of the person with PD. This will help the person feel more comfortable and reduce the need to respond quickly.
- Do not speak to a person who has difficulty hearing from another room. Make sure you have their attention first.
- Be positive and reassuring and give ample time for the person to respond. Take a deep breath and keep listening!
- Be kind and forgiving. Avoid over-correcting errors made by the person and completing their sentences.
- Repeat the message in other words, if needed. If the person with hearing impairment does not appear to understand what is being said, rephrase the statement rather than simply repeating the misunderstood words.
- If you are a caregiver/carepartner, make a plan to equip the person with PD to be able to communicate in the case of an emergency. For example, use a baby monitor to alert others, use 'codes' that signify urgency, or preprogram a cellphone with the necessary emergency number(s).

Communication difficulties stemming from impaired speech and hearing can significantly affect the quality of life for those with Parkinson's disease. However, speech therapy and other programs have been proven effective in improving these symptoms. To facilitate effective communication and enhance the quality of life, individuals can benefit from implementing the tips mentioned and, most importantly, approaching communication with respect and patience.

Additional Resources

- Enhancing Communication [[helpsheet](#)]
- Communication and Swallowing in Parkinson's Disease | Sherri K Zelazny [[view video](#)] [[view slides](#)]
- Voice and Speech | SLP, Jasmine Cload | [[view video](#)] [[view slides](#)]
- Speech and Voice Changes in Parkinson's Disease | Meaghan Delaney [[view video](#)]

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