

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Rock Steady Boxing** | Tuesdays, November 7, 14, 21 & 28  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/rsb-octnov23>
- **SongShine with Joani** | Thursdays, November 9, 16, 23, 30 and December 7 & 14  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/songshinenovdec-23>
- **Unlocking Insights: Imaging and Biomarkers in Parkinson's** | Monday, November 13  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/imagingbiomarkers-23>
- **Parenting with Parkinson's: Impact on Children, Teens, and Young Adults** | Tuesday, November 21 | Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/pdparenting-nov23>
- **Move with Confidence: Parkinson's Fitness** | Tuesdays, December 5, 12 & 19  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/movewconf-dec23>
- **Debriefing the Caregiver Role** | Thursday, December 7  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/debriefdec-23>
- **Holiday Caroling** | Tuesday, December 12  
Learn more & register: <https://parkinson.bc.ca/holidaycaroling-23>
- **Bollywood Dance** | Thursdays, January 11, 18, 25 & February 1  
Learn more & register: <https://www.parkinson.bc.ca/bollywoodjan-23>

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## UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

### **Donate a Car Canada**

[Donate a Car Canada](#) accepts vehicle donations for Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC)! Free towing is provided in most areas across Canada. When you donate your car, truck, RV, boat, or motorcycle to PSBC through Donate A Car Canada, it will either be recycled or sold at auction (depending on its condition, age, and location). After your vehicle donation is complete, PSBC will send you a tax receipt and will put your gift to good use.

### **Brighten the day with a bouquet from Callia Flowers**

For a limited time, [Callia Flowers](#) is offering Parkinson Society BC's (PSBC) community members a \$5 discount on any order they place using the code: **PARKINSONBC**. With every order placed using the custom code, Callia will donate 10% of the net sales to the Society. Join

us in making a meaningful impact in our community and spread the love with Callia Flowers today!

### ***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](mailto:events@parkinson.bc.ca) or 1-800-668-3330.

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### **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 fall prevention!

To enhance safety and reduce the risk of falls, consider installing nightlights in various areas of your living space. Prioritize areas where you move most frequently during the night, such as hallways, bedrooms, and bathrooms. Additionally, consider placing nightlights near light switches, stairs, and any potential obstacles in your path. When strategically placed around your home, nightlights can provide gentle illumination, making it easier to navigate and reduce the risk of tripping or falling. You can also consider motion-activated lights for added convenience. These lights automatically turn on when they detect movement, making it easier to find your way without having to fumble for switches.

*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](mailto:info@parkinson.bc.ca).*

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### **NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### ***Fall Prevention Month***

Statistics Canada indicates that falls are the primary cause of injuries among elderly Canadians, impacting one in three individuals aged 65 and over each year. Fall Prevention Month is observed annually in November, emphasizing the importance of safety measures and

proactively tackling fall risk factors. This is particularly critical for individuals with Parkinson's disease, given the heightened susceptibility to falls resulting from prevalent motor symptoms like balance difficulties, muscle rigidity, and gait disturbances. [\[learn more\]](#)

### ***Community Needs Survey***

Parkinson Society British Columbia is executing a community needs survey to evaluate our programs and services. The data collected will help guide our future priorities as an organization. Responses will be accepted until Wednesday, November 8. [\[take survey\]](#)

### ***Seeking Support Group Facilitators***

Parkinson Society British Columbia is currently seeking volunteer support group facilitators for Abbotsford (in-person), Tri Cities/Coquitlam Caregivers (in-person), and West Kelowna (in-person). If you're interested in starting your own support group in your area, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). [\[learn more\]](#)

### ***Join PSBC's Book Club!***

PSBC's Book Club is a social club for like-minded people who have PD, or carepartners of those with PD, to meet and discuss books that are selected by the peer committee or group members. The group meets at 11:30 am on the first Thursday of each month. If you are interested in joining this virtual, peer-led book club, please contact [Kelly Felgenhauer](#).

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## ***DISCUSSION TOPIC: Fall Prevention***

### ***Discussion Questions***

1. What strategies or techniques have you found most effective in preventing falls or minimizing their impact?
2. In your experience, what role does exercise play in fall prevention for individuals with Parkinson's? Have you found specific exercises or activities particularly beneficial, and how do you incorporate them into your routine?

3. What are some obstacles or barriers you have encountered when trying to create a safer environment to prevent falls? How have you addressed these challenges, and do you have any advice for others facing similar issues?
4. What role does communication play in fall prevention within your caregiving relationship or as a person with Parkinson's? How do you discuss concerns and strategies for staying safe?

An alarming 60.5% of individuals living with Parkinson's disease (PD) report experiencing falls, and 39% grapple with the persisting issue of recurrent falls (Allen et al., 2013). These disconcerting statistics firmly place falls as one of the leading causes of hospitalizations in this demographic. Parkinson's disease influences the brain's balance and coordination control mechanisms, necessitating conscious effort to manage what were once automatic adjustments (Parkinson Society BC, 2021). Although falls are not an inevitable consequence of Parkinson's, several factors make people with Parkinson's (PwP) more susceptible to them. The shift in balance and coordination experienced by PwP is significant as it can lead to severe physical consequences, including injuries and reduced mobility, such as gait or freezing symptoms. Equally important is the emotional toll, as the pervasive "fear of falling" affects individuals and their caregivers. This fear often results in self-imposed activity limitations, which, in turn, further deteriorates the overall quality of life and sense of independence. Given these compelling statistics and the unique challenges posed by Parkinson's, it becomes evident that implementing effective fall-prevention strategies is of paramount importance for those living with PD.

### **Risk Factors**

When considering the risk factors for falls, they can be categorized into two groups. The first pertains to risks associated with the individual, encompassing elements such as their physical condition and overall health, such as a diagnosis of chronic conditions like Parkinson's. However, it's crucial to emphasize that the emergence of falls in Parkinson's is not solely dependent on the severity of the disease itself. Research has demonstrated that individuals can

be at a heightened risk of falls and fractures up to a decade before receiving a Parkinson's diagnosis. The second category focuses on risks related to the environment, including factors like slippery floors and inadequate lighting. The presence of more risk factors within these categories elevates the likelihood of falls occurring (Parmar, 2021). In both categories, some factors can be altered or addressed through preventive measures, as well as factors that necessitate adaptation and accommodation in our daily lives.

To identify your specific risk factors, it is advisable to engage with your healthcare team which may include a physician, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist. This proactive approach can provide valuable insights and guidance for effective fall prevention strategies tailored to your unique circumstances. Listed below are some common risk factors to consider.

- **Gait and Balance Impairments:** Parkinson's disease often leads to gait disturbances and balance issues, making it difficult for patients to maintain stability while walking or standing.
- **Medication Side Effects:** Some Parkinson's medications like dopamine agonists, and higher doses of levodopa, can cause dizziness, dyskinesias, low blood pressure, and confusion, which can contribute to falls.
- **Muscle Weakness:** Progressive muscle weakness can make it harder for individuals with Parkinson's to support their body weight and maintain balance.
- **Postural Instability:** People with Parkinson's may experience a forward-leaning posture, which increases the likelihood of falling forward.
- **Freezing of Gait:** Freezing episodes are when individuals suddenly find themselves unable to move forward, which can lead to falls.
- **Cognitive Impairment:** Cognitive changes associated with Parkinson's can affect judgment, perception, and reaction times, all of which play a role in fall risk.
- **Environmental Factors:** Hazards in the home or outside can increase the risk of falls. These include slippery floors, poor lighting, and obstacles in the walking path (Acerra et al., 2020).

### *Fall Prevention Tips*

Prevention and careful planning play a crucial role in reducing the risk of falls. While it's impossible to prevent all falls, there are proactive measures you can take to enhance your safety and decrease both the frequency and severity of falls and potential injuries.

If you have experienced a fall, one of the most vital techniques to prevent it from recurring is to pause and reflect on the circumstances surrounding the fall. It's essential to ask yourself questions like when, where, and why these falls are occurring. Are you experiencing falls while attempting to navigate your kitchen? Do they happen while reaching for an object? Are you feeling dizzy when rising from a seated position, resulting in falls? Are you falling backwards? By identifying the specific reasons behind these falls, you can engage in more effective problem-solving to enhance your balance and minimize the risk of falling.

Consider these helpful tips to reduce the likelihood of falls and enhance overall safety:

- **Exercise Regularly:** Engaging in a structured exercise program can significantly improve gait and balance. If you practice your balance, it is much more likely to be there for you when you need it. Activities such as yoga, tai chi, and physical therapy can help individuals with Parkinson's regain strength and coordination. Exercises as simple as walking can also reduce the risk of falls (Acerra et al., 2020).
- **Medication Management:** Consult your neurologist to discuss medication adjustments to minimize side effects like dizziness or confusion. Always take medications as prescribed and follow up with your healthcare provider regularly (Acerra et al., 2020).
- **Strength Training:** A physical therapist can design a personalized strength training program to target muscle weakness and help improve stability (Parmar, 2021).
- **Fall-Prevention Aids:** The use of assistive devices like canes or walkers, when in good condition, appropriately adjusted and utilized correctly can significantly improve balance. It's crucial to be aware however that incorrectly using assistive devices can exacerbate issues (Parmar, 2021).
- **Orthostatic Hypotension Management:** If you experience low blood pressure when standing, try to rise slowly and stay hydrated (Parkinson Society BC, 2021).

- **Adaptive Footwear:** Invest in comfortable, well-fitting, and non-slip shoes that provide good support. This can make a significant difference in maintaining balance (Parkinson Society BC, 2021).
- **Home Safety Modifications:** Make necessary changes to your home environment. Install handrails in hallways and bathrooms, eliminate tripping hazards, and improve lighting. You can always ask for an occupational therapist safety assessment to review your environmental risks (Acerra et al., 2020).
- **Orthopedic Assessments:** Regularly check for orthopedic issues that may affect balance and mobility. Consult with a specialist if necessary (Parmar, 2021).
- **Vision Check:** Poor vision can contribute to falls. Ensure you have regular eye exams and wear appropriate corrective lenses if required (Parmar, 2021).
- **Nutrition and Hydration:** A balanced diet and staying hydrated are crucial for maintaining strength and preventing dizziness. Consult a nutritionist to address specific concerns (Parmar, 2021).
- **Cognitive Training:** Engage in cognitive exercises to improve memory and decision-making skills, which can help prevent falls (Parmar, 2021).
- **Freezing of Gait Management:** If you experience freezing episodes, techniques like visual cues (e.g., lines on the floor) and rhythmic auditory stimulation (e.g., listening to a metronome) can help reduce freezing episodes (Acerra et al., 2020).
- **Consider Physiotherapy:** A physiotherapy assessment is recommended for every individual with PD. A qualified physiotherapist can assess posture, gait, balance, strength, and coordination. They can also help design a PD-specific exercise and treatment plan, which will assist in improving areas in which you may be struggling (Acerra et al., 2020).

### *Fall Prevention Tips for Caregivers*

Caregivers play a pivotal role in fall prevention for individuals with Parkinson's. Their support extends beyond physical assistance to encompass emotional and psychological aid. They serve as vigilant observers, readily identifying any changes in the individual's condition or increased fall risk, which can prompt timely adjustments to the care plan. Continuous support and

communication are essential in the shared goal of reducing the incidence of falls and ensuring the well-being and safety of individuals with PD (Davey et al., 2004).

- **Education:** Caregivers should actively educate themselves about the changes and factors that render people with Parkinson's more susceptible to fall risks. Understanding the condition is the first step in providing effective care (Davey et al., 2004).
- **Supervision:** Pay close attention when accompanying individuals during activities. Offer a steady and supportive hand when necessary to mitigate falls.
- **Supportive Home Environment:** Create a safe and clutter-free home environment to reduce fall hazards by identifying potential hazards and implementing necessary modifications at home. This may include removing rugs, ensuring proper lighting, and installing grab bars.
- **Medication Management:** Assist with medication management, ensuring doses are taken as prescribed and promptly reporting any adverse effects like dizziness and balance issues which increase the likelihood of falls to the healthcare professional.
- **Communication:** Foster open communication with the person with Parkinson's. Encourage them to share their concerns and fears about falls. Encouragement and motivation from caregivers are invaluable in the individual's overall well-being.
- **Regular Medical Check-Ups:** Ensure the person with Parkinson's receives regular check-ups with their healthcare team, including neurologists and physical therapists.
- **Safety Awareness:** Teach the individual about fall prevention strategies and encourage them to actively participate in their own safety.
- **Emergency Plan:** Develop an emergency plan in case a fall does occur. This may include knowing how to help the person up safely and when to seek medical attention (Acerra et al., 2020).

Fall prevention is a critical aspect of managing Parkinson's disease and maintaining a high quality of life. The journey of navigating this condition is a shared one, involving not only individuals with Parkinson's but also their devoted caregivers. By staying informed about the risk factors, seeking guidance from healthcare professionals, and actively implementing strategies tailored to your unique circumstances, you can significantly reduce the risk of falls.



Together, PwP and their caregivers can create a safe and supportive environment that empowers individuals with PD to live more independently and confidently.

### **Additional Resources**

Parkinson Society British Columbia Viewpoints Fall (2019) Naomi Casiro Discusses Balance & Falling in Parkinson's <https://bit.ly/vptsbalancefalling>

Balance Exercises for Parkinson's Video Series | <http://bit.ly/balanceexercises>

In-Home Safety Check Helpsheet | <https://bit.ly/pdhomesafetycheck>

Stay on Your Feet Booklet | <https://bit.ly/pdstayonyourfeet>

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Davey, C., Wiles, R., Ashburn, A., & Murphy, C. (2004). Falling in Parkinson's disease: the impact on informal caregivers. *Disability and rehabilitation*, 26(23), 1360–1366.

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