

## How can I help myself?

There are numerous things you can do to help manage your symptoms, such as regular exercise, good nutrition, emotional support, stress management, and speech therapy.

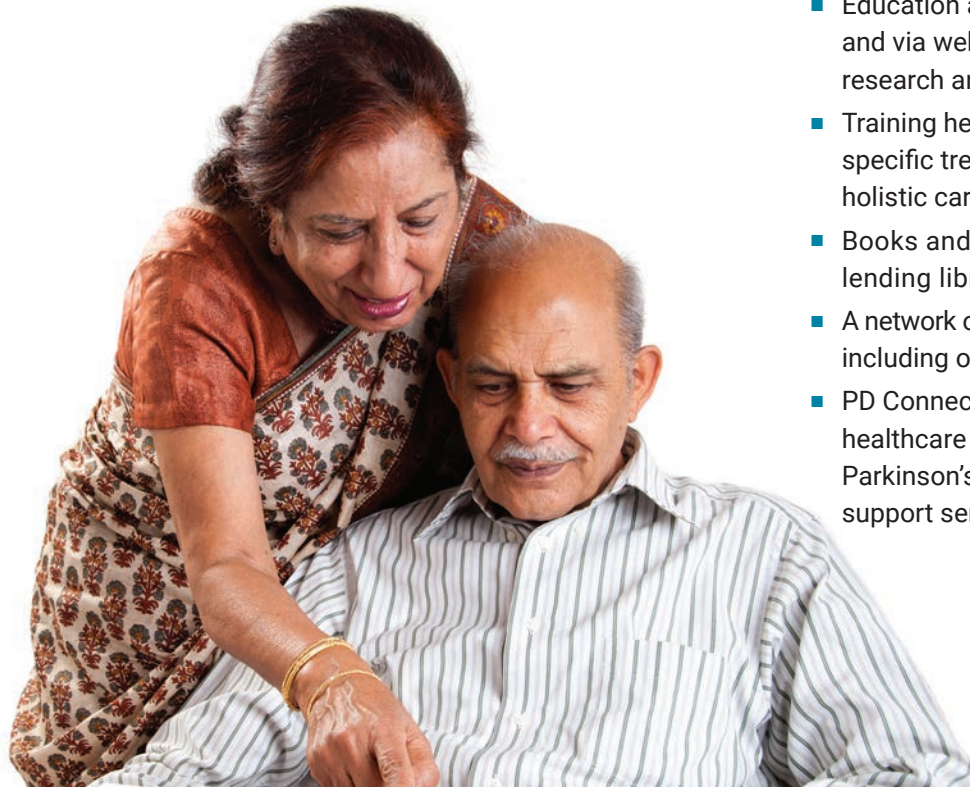
## What do carepartners/caregivers need to know?

*Parkinson's changes your life too.* If you are providing care to someone with Parkinson's, you need to look after yourself and know how to reach out for support.

### Remember to:

- Learn about self-care
- Find out about community resources for carepartners/caregivers
- Join a support group in your area
- Ask for help

The Parkinson's journey is different for each person. As you encounter challenges along the way, please contact us to find out how we can help.



## Parkinson Society British Columbia

Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC) is a not-for-profit charitable organization that aims to empower the Parkinson's community in British Columbia by providing resources and services to enable self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.

Our services include, but are not limited to:

- One-on-one consultations by phone, e-mail, and in-person
- Free, confidential, short-term counselling services for people affected by Parkinson's
- Virtual physiotherapy consultations for those that meet certain criteria limiting access to Parkinson's-specific care
- PDLINK, a peer-to-peer program that matches individuals living similar experiences
- Publication of informational resources, such as *Viewpoints*, a quarterly newsletter with up-to-date information on research, medication, caregiving, nutrition, and more
- Education and exercise events held across BC and via webinar, featuring experts in Parkinson's research and treatments
- Training healthcare professionals in Parkinson's-specific treatments in an effort to provide more holistic care to the Parkinson's community
- Books and DVDs available through our lending library
- A network of over 50 support groups province-wide, including online support groups
- PD Connect, a formal referral program where healthcare professionals refer patients with Parkinson's and their carepartners to PSBC for support services

## Your support is essential!

Annual membership with the Society is \$25 per household. Membership fees and donations will enhance PSBC's ability to deliver services for people affected by Parkinson's and fund research.

*Parkinson Society British Columbia, governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, is supported by donations from individuals, members, corporations, foundations, and the dedicated efforts of volunteers.*



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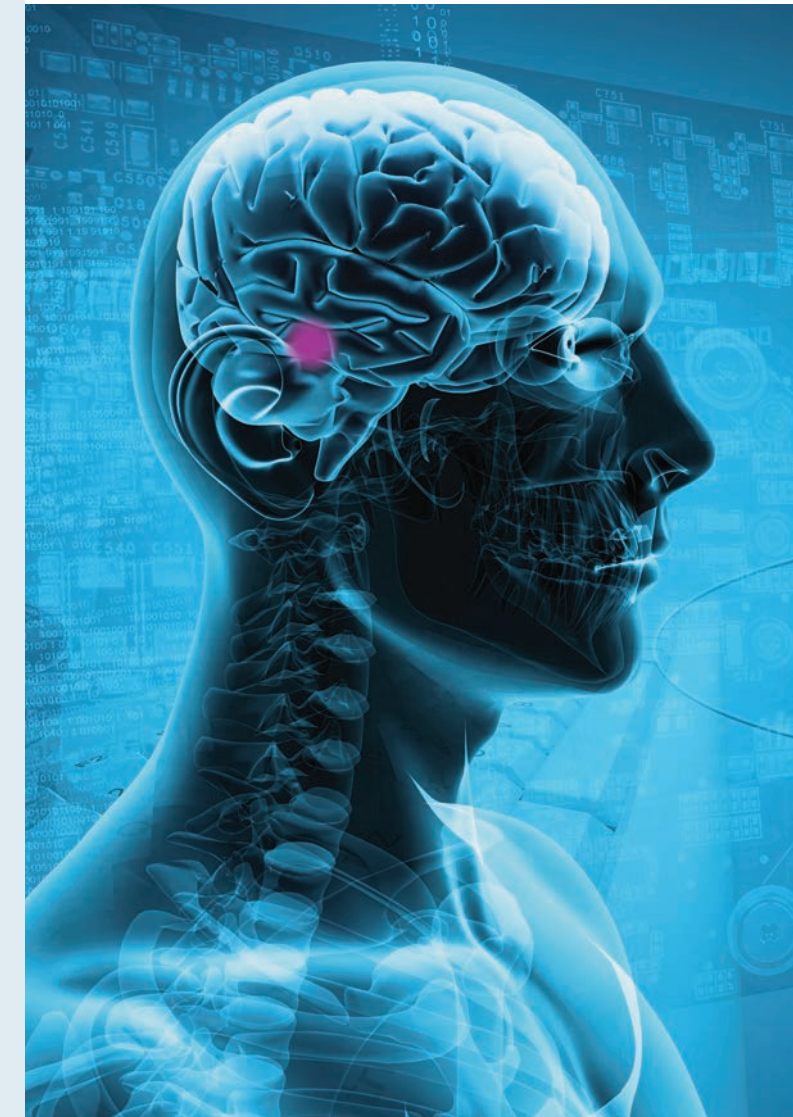


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Parkinson Society  
British Columbia

# What is Parkinson's Disease



# What is Parkinson's disease?

*Parkinson's is the second most common degenerative neurological disorder after Alzheimer's disease.*

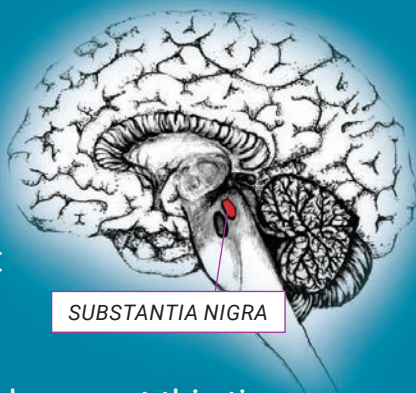
Parkinson's is caused by a loss of dopamine in the area of the brain called the substantia nigra. The cells that produce dopamine begin to die, reducing the amount of dopamine.

While there are many theories about why the cells die, the exact reasons are unknown at this time.

The symptoms of Parkinson's appear when over half of the dopamine cells are lost. The progression of the disease and accompanying symptoms vary with each individual.

To find support to help you live well with Parkinson's, please call us.

**You are not alone.  
We are here to help.**



## What is dopamine?

Dopamine is a chemical in the brain that controls the way messages travel from one nerve cell to another. It affects the parts of the brain controlling voluntary movement such as walking, writing, throwing a ball, or buttoning a shirt. It is also essential for involuntary movements including control of blood pressure and bowel function. Loss of dopamine can also affect mood and thinking.

## What is the cause of Parkinson's?

The exact cause remains unknown. It is possible, however, that genetics and the environment work together to cause Parkinson's. Much more research is needed to completely understand how, why, and when this happens.

## How is Parkinson's diagnosed?

There are no specific brain scans or laboratory tests to confirm the diagnosis of Parkinson's. Neurologists diagnose it with a thorough study of a person's medical history, and careful physical examination. Tests may be done to rule out other conditions which may resemble Parkinson's.

## Is there a cure for Parkinson's?

At present, there is no known cure. Researchers around the world are working tirelessly to find the cause and cure for Parkinson's.

## Who develops Parkinson's?

- There are approximately 100,000 (2008) people with Parkinson's in Canada, including 14,500 (2019/2020) in British Columbia
- The average age of diagnosis is 60
- Up to 20% of individuals with Parkinson's develop symptoms before the age of 50
- Currently, it is estimated that 12% of Canada's population over 80 lives with Parkinson's disease

## Symptoms of Parkinson's

### Most common symptoms:

- **Resting tremor** – These are repetitive shaking movements that often occur in the arms or legs at rest. Tremors are the first symptom to appear in about 70% of people with Parkinson's.
- **Rigidity** – This is increased stiffness in muscles and joints.
- **Bradykinesia** – This means "slowness of movement". It involves all movements including walking and writing.
- **Balance and postural** impairment.

*Note: Resting tremor, rigidity, and bradykinesia can be temporarily worsened by stress.*

### Other symptoms can include:

- **Hypomimia** – This means reduced facial expression, which makes a person appear uninterested or sad when they are not.
- **Hypophonia** – A person's voice may become very soft. Deterioration in the rhythm and quality of the voice is common.
- **Micrographia** – Handwriting may become small and cramped.
- **Changes in mind, mood, and memory** – Depression and anxiety are very common. Forgetfulness and confusion can also occur.
- **Difficulties with sleep** – This can include insomnia, vivid dreams, nightmares, and daytime sleepiness.
- **Constipation** – Approximately 50% of people with Parkinson's experience cramps and/or constipation.
- **Pain** – Different kinds of pain are common.
- **Fatigue** – A person may feel tired or exhausted, and the capacity for normal work or activity is reduced.



## How is Parkinson's treated?

The symptoms of Parkinson's can be treated with medication. In some cases, surgery can be effective.

The drugs used to treat Parkinson's either replace the lost dopamine, or mimic the action of dopamine in the brain.

Increasing the amount of dopamine can alleviate the symptoms, but does not slow the progression of the disorder. As the symptoms worsen, more medication is needed.

**Taking medication on time is an integral part of treatment.** It is very important for the person with Parkinson's, and close family and friends, to understand the action and side effects of the medications, and what improvement can be reasonably expected.

**Remember that medications can help you achieve good symptom control. Ask your physician and your pharmacist for information about medication.**

**Researchers around the world are working tirelessly to find the cause and cure for Parkinson's.**