

PARKINSON SOCIETY  
SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

# SUPPORT STRATEGIES

for people affected by Parkinson's  
disease

[pssso.ca](http://pssso.ca)

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# INTRODUCTION

Having Parkinson's Disease is a challenge but having support strategies can help you persevere. It is important to understand your challenges in order to find the best strategies for you.

Support strategies are ways that you can help yourself through the ups and downs and how your care partners can aid you in your journey.

Please note all information provided in this toolkit is for information purposes only. Please be sure to ask your healthcare professional before addressing any of these topics on your own.

# WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR HEALTH

Other than medications, there are other ways to improve health thus overall quality of living with Parkinson's Disease. Exercise, sleep, and a healthy diet are significant factors supporting one's well-being.



# EXERCISE

Engaging in physical exercise has several benefits such as increasing your flexibility, coordination, muscle strength, and balance. This can reduce your risk of falls and help you move around with less anxiety about falls.

In addition to the benefits to your physical health, exercise can improve your mental health as well. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins which act as natural painkillers, and improve your sense of well-being.

# SLEEP

Sleeping well is also key to your physical health but is often overlooked. Aim for at least 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Having Parkinson's can disturb your sleep cycle, so it can be beneficial to consult a professional to improve your sleep hygiene.

Having a regular sleep schedule, not stressing before bed, having a good mattress and pillow, and having short daytime naps are some ways that help improve your sleep hygiene allowing you to sleep better.

# HEALTHY DIET

There is currently no treatment for Parkinson's Disease so food acts as an alternative and natural remedy.

Some foods that are good for you to consume include fruits like bananas and watermelon, whole grains, seeds, nuts, olive oil, and plant based-foods.

Some foods that you should avoid are red meat, saturated fats, processed foods, excess protein, and foods high in citrus.

Check out our Self-Management Toolkit for more information about healthy eating while living with Parkinson's!

# WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MOTOR SYMPTOMS

It is beneficial to have assistive devices, strategies, and routines to help you with motor symptoms and reduce the risk of falls.





# WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MOTOR SYMPTOMS

It can be beneficial to have assistive devices to help you with motor symptoms and to reduce the risk of falls. Assistive devices can help ease day-to-day tasks such as:

1. walking aids
2. eating utensils
3. clothing (magnetic buttons, Velcro shoes, zipper pulls)
4. bars or handrails in the washroom
5. tub chairs
6. electric toothbrushes

Walking aids may also help with the freezing of gait.

For freezing of gait, talk to your doctor about the adjustment of medications that affect your gait. A helpful strategy may be to use cueing (using a spatial or temporal stimulus to facilitate the initiation of a motor activity like playing beats according to your preferred gait speed).

# WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MOTOR SYMPTOMS

Another strategy is the 4 S for Festination (small, rapid steps):

1. **S**top
2. **S**tand straight
3. **S**hift your weight (Sway from one leg to another)
4. **S**tep over (take a big step forward with heel forward).

Have a steady routine which includes taking your medications on time in order to manage your motor symptoms.

Adjusting your phone settings can make it more accessible to you when you are experiencing motor symptoms

# WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

You are not alone in your journey, as it may improve your mental well-being by seeking support from your loved ones and support animals.

Awareness of Parkinson's and learning more about it is vital to understand what you are going through. It can help you manage your stress and anxiety.

Setting goals can be a fun way to learn more about your passions and work towards them. It will help you make time for things that mean the most to you.

# WAYS TO SUPPORT AS A CARE PARTNER

Being a care partner is a vital part of one's journey with Parkinson's. Your love and support can help a client immensely. As care partners, it is often best to ask what they like to be supported with and how you can help them best.

You can volunteer to help with chores requiring several movements as it may be hard to engage in them with motor symptoms.

It can also be helpful to encourage them to engage in support strategies such as those formerly mentioned, reduce sensory distractions, and help them maintain a routine to help improve their quality of life.



# WAYS TO SUPPORT AS A CARE PARTNER



Helping with their mental health is as important as their physical health. By listening to how they feel and being patient, you can help improve their mood when they are feeling upset.



You can talk to them about things they did before their diagnosis and things they liked to make them feel more comfortable. This will also ensure that they socialize. Going out or socializing with others can help them not isolate themselves. A support group may also help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.



# PARKINSON'S EDUCATION PROGRAM (PEP)

PEP is an online, introductory course by Parkinson Society Southwestern Ontario. It is a course aimed at caregivers and healthcare workers who care for those with Parkinson's Disease.

There are 8 modules (35-60 minutes each) in the course:

1. What is Parkinson's
2. Communication
3. Emotional and psychiatric changes
4. Sleep and fatigue
5. Nutrition and swallowing
6. Activities of daily living
7. Movement and mobility
8. Medical treatment

It has multiple choice questions at the end and a pass grade of 80% is required for a certificate of completion.

For more information and to sign up, use this link.  
<https://pssso.ca/programs-services/pep-online/>

# RESOURCE APPENDIX

1. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/parkinsons-disease/living-with/>
2. <https://psso.ca/programs-services/pep-online/#:~:text=PEP%20Online%20is%20an%20introductory,with%20moderate%20to%20severe%20Parkinson's.>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mp4hnngoQULI&t=441s>
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6960538/#:~:text=Cueing%20for%20Rehabilitation%20in%20PD&text=Cueing%20can%20be%20defined%20as,maintaining%20motor%20activity%20%5B32%5D.>
5. <https://www.verywellmind.com/parkinson-s-disease-coping-support-and-living-well-5194608>
6. <https://parkinsonsdisease.net/living-with-pd/assistive-devices>
7. <https://www.parkinson.org/blog/tips/living-alone>
8. <https://www.neurologysolutions.com/living-well-parkinsons/>
9. <https://www.healthline.com/health/parkinsons-disease/how-to-support#be-patient>
10. <https://www.webmd.com/parkinsons-disease/guide/living-with-parkinsons-disease-tips>

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