

Patient information

Parkinson's Care Plan - Take Control

What to do if your Parkinson's suddenly gets worse

People with Parkinson's disease sometimes experience a worsening of their symptoms. It is unusual for a rapid deterioration to be caused by the Parkinson's Disease (PD) alone. Often there are other reasons. In the event of a sudden worsening of symptoms these following steps may be helpful.

In an emergency, or if seriously unwell, seek medical help or call an ambulance immediately.

Has your anti-Parkinson's treatment recently been changed?

When treatments for Parkinson's disease are changed most people notice an improvement in their symptoms. Occasionally a change in medication can cause a worsening of symptoms. If the dose has recently been increased or a new treatment started the risk of side effects is higher.

Common side effects include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded (sometimes due to low blood pressure)
- Feeling tired and sleeping excessively during the day
- Involuntary writhing movement termed as 'dyskinesia'
- Confusion
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there)



If you suspect a change in medication has caused you to feel unwell, contact your Parkinson's Nurse, Neurologist, GP, Pharmacist or the

Parkinson's UK helpline to discuss the issue. Avoid abruptly stopping medication without first discussing it with a healthcare professional.

Drug information can be found on the leaflet supplied with your medication. Further information regarding the drug treatment of Parkinson's is available in the Drug Treatment for Parkinson's booklet available from your PD Nurse or from Parkinson's UK.

What else could it be?

- **Urine infection** can cause a worsening of PD symptoms.

Symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI) can include:

- ◇ Confusion
- ◇ Passing urine more often
- ◇ Discoloured or cloudy urine (some drugs used to treat PD may discolour urine)
- ◇ Unusually unpleasant smelling urine
- ◇ Pain on passing urine
- ◇ Passing blood in your urine
- ◇ Abdominal or back pain
- ◇ Generally feeling unwell
- ◇ Raised temperature or feeling feverish



If a urine infection is suspected, seek advice at your GP surgery. A sample of urine may be required for testing. Discuss this with your surgery at the earliest opportunity as if treatment is deemed necessary, it should be started as soon as possible to help prevent the infection worsening.

- **Chest Infections** may also worsen your Parkinson's.

Symptoms include:

- ◇ Persistent chesty cough
- ◇ Feeling breathless or wheezy
- ◇ Coughing up yellow or green phlegm
- ◇ Raised temperature
- ◇ Chest pain
- ◇ Generally feeling unwell



If a chest infection is suspected seek advice at your GP surgery. Not all infections require antibiotics.

If you are having problems with swallowing and find you are coughing when eating and drinking, or have suffered multiple chest infections, it may be linked to your Parkinson's. Please inform your PD Nurse if this is the case.

- **Other infections** may also cause problems with your PD. If infection is suspected seek advice at your surgery. You will need to rest and drink plenty of fluids. Regular taking of paracetamol should help to treat fever and any aches and pains you may have.
- **Constipation** is common in the general population particularly as we age. Mild constipation is not uncommon in PD and it could result in a worsening of your symptoms. Constipation can usually be managed by a healthy diet with plenty of dietary fibre, fluids and exercise. Sometimes laxatives may be required. See the Parkinson's UK factsheet "Looking After Your Bladder and Bowels" for further information.

Chronic constipation can increase the risk of faecal impaction (where dried, hard stools collect in your rectum). Once you have faecal impaction, it is very unlikely that you will be able to pass the stools naturally, and this can cause the leaking of liquid stools which is sometimes mistaken for diarrhea. Any treatments to help diarrhoea will only make the problem worse.



A healthy diet, regular exercise, fluids, and fibre will contribute to healthy bowel management. Take note of your regular bowel habits. Take any laxatives regularly rather than as required as this will allow your bowel to get into a routine. You may find you need to take your laxatives twice a day, or it may be every 3 days, you will work out what suits you best. If you deviate from your normal pattern, you will need to visit your GP or practice nurse for further treatment or advice. Leaving constipation untreated can cause worsening of PD symptoms, UTI's, confusion, or even hospital admission.

- **Dehydration** is common in the general population. Sometimes if severe this can make your Parkinson's worse. You should aim to drink 1.5 litres of fluid a day, possibly more in hot weather or if you are ill with diarrhoea etc. Symptoms of **mild dehydration** include:

◇ Thirst

- ◇ Dizziness or light-headedness
- ◇ Headache
- ◇ Tiredness
- ◇ Dry mouth, lips and eyes
- ◇ Concentrated urine (dark yellow)
- ◇ Passing only small amounts of urine infrequently (less than three or four times a day)

To avoid **severe dehydration** increase your fluid intake and address any potential causes such as diarrhoea or infections. Symptoms of severe dehydration include:

- ◇ An inability to urinate, or not passing urine for eight hours
- ◇ Irritability
- ◇ Sunken eyes
- ◇ Low blood pressure (hypotension)
- ◇ Weak pulse
- ◇ Rapid heartbeat
- ◇ Cool hands and feet
- ◇ Fits (seizures)
- ◇ Low level of consciousness
- ◇ Feeling tired (lethargic) or confused
- ◇ Blood in your stools (faeces) or vomit



Severe dehydration is a serious condition; you will need to seek medical help quickly as you may require admission to hospital.

Other changes in your health will contribute to worsening of your PD symptoms. A common cold or un-controlled pain has the potential to affect your Parkinson's.

Once the underlying cause for the deterioration of your Parkinson's has been successfully treated your Parkinson's should return to how it was within a few weeks. If after 4 weeks your Parkinson's is still causing a concern please contact your Parkinson's Nurse for a review.

Further information and support

Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist

West Suffolk Hospital

Tel: 01284 713718

Monday to Friday 8.00 am—4.00 pm. Please leave a message on the answerphone.

Consultant Neurologists contact details:

Dr Molyneux's secretary 01284 712897

Dr Brierley's secretary 01284 712984

Dr Worth and Dr Crawleys' secretary 01284 712610

Parkinson's UK

Website: parkinsons.org.uk

Free helpline 0808 800 0303

Monday—Friday 9.00 am— 8.00 pm

Saturday 10.00 am - 2.00 pm

NHS Choices

Website <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

NHS Direct

Telephone: 111

You should use the NHS 111 service if you urgently need medical help or advice but it is not a life-threatening situation.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>