What is Parkinson disease?

Parkinson disease is:
- A chronic movement disorder
- A loss of dopamine in the brain
- Variable in its progression
- Treatable, but not curable
- Neurologic
- Not contagious and rarely inherited

Parkinson’s does not shorten one’s life expectancy, although there is currently no cure. The disease is chronic and progressive, but is a treatable neurologic disease, with the goal of treatment being to alleviate symptoms, prevent injury and improve quality of life.
What causes Parkinson disease?

Dopamine is a chemical neurotransmitter found in the brain that helps to control movement, coordination, and balance. People with Parkinson’s have impaired or damaged dopamine-producing cells. Loss of the dopamine-producing neurons results in an inability to control movements in a normal manner.

There are several theories why this happens, including genetics, exposure to toxins like heavy metals or organic solvents, or oxidative stress, but a cause is not currently known.

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What are the symptoms of Parkinson disease?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESTING TREMOR</td>
<td>Tremor has regular rate and rhythm and usually begins on one side of the body. It usually occurs when muscles are at rest, and anxiety or stress can exacerbate tremors. Tremor is rarely disabling and usually disappears during sleep or is lessened with intentional movement, such as reaching out to shake hands or gripping something.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRADYKINESIA, OR SLOWNESS OF MOVEMENT</td>
<td>Bradykinesia a general reduction of spontaneous or repetitive movements. It may cause difficulty in performing everyday tasks such as buttoning a shirt, brushing teeth, writing or cutting up food. Bradykinesia may also cause shuffling when walking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>POSTURAL INSTABILITY</td>
<td>This impaired balance and coordination can cause patients to have stooped posture, with the head bowed and the shoulders dropped. Walking, balancing or turning around can be difficult, and postural instability may cause people to fall backwards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIGIDITY</td>
<td>Rigidity causes stiff muscle tone, which can contribute to a loss of range of motion, as well as stiffness and inflexibility of the arms, legs and neck. Rigidity can cause pain and discomfort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER THINGS YOU MAY NOTICE</td>
<td>Symptoms may include small handwriting, lack of facial expression, quiet or muffled speech, constipation, fatigue, sleep disturbances, salivation, anxiety and/or depression.</td>
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Who gets Parkinson disease?

Anyone. More than 1 million people in the US have been diagnosed, and there are about 60,000 new cases diagnosed each year, and more than 20,000 people in Wisconsin are living with Parkinson disease.

Older adults. The average age of onset is 60, although 10% or more of Parkinson Disease patients are under age 50 when diagnosed.

How is Parkinson disease treated?

There currently is no cure for Parkinson Disease, however there are many ways to improve the quality of life for patients:

- Medication management
- Surgical procedure called Deep Brain Stimulation
- Regular exercise
- Physical, occupational and speech therapy
- Balanced and nutritious diet
- Support groups
- Holistic medicine

Visit wiparkinson.org to find a specialist in your area.