



# Exercising with Parkinson's disease

## Every move counts

Move more and reduce your sedentary time each day by incorporating different types of movement. It is never too late to start, some is always better than none!

## How to get started

Regular exercise in Parkinson's disease lowers your risk of medical complications, improves health and reduces some of your symptoms, increasing your ability to enjoy the functional activities of daily living. Exercise improves poor balance, rigidity, slowness, posture and impaired movement. It also significantly improves walking speed, stride length, walking gait, fine motor skills, balance control and arm tremor. Strength, flexibility and balance exercises that focus on improving the mobility of the core improve the ability to recover from postural problems such as frozen stance, loss of balance and falls, and greatly improve weakness or stiffness.

Regular exercise significantly reduces your risks of some cancers, stroke, obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, dementia, depression and osteoporosis. Movement exercises that promote good posture, balance and rhythmic activities can significantly improve your symptom control.

Exercise at a time when your mobility is easiest and ask your doctor or healthcare provider for specific exercises that can help reduce your symptoms.

If you have other long-term health problems or are inactive, speak to your doctor or healthcare provider before exercising.

**Take all medicines as recommended by your doctor or pharmacist.**

## Warm up and cool down

**Always start your exercise session with a 10–15-minute warm up to loosen up the muscles and raise the heart rate safely.** Warm-up exercises include dynamic stretches, range-of-motion activities and low intensity movements. This can be done standing up, walking around, marching on the spot or seated.

**Always end your exercise session with a 10–15-minute cool-down to ensure your heart rate and breathing rate return to normal safely.** Cool down exercises include slowly decreasing the intensity of your activity and simple stretches.

## Be active

### Some is good, more is better

<b>How much:</b>	Aim for at least <b>150-300</b> minutes a week of moderate intensity or at least <b>75-150</b> minutes a week of vigorous intensity physical activity. Start moving more each day increasing to regular movement every day and add sessions as your strength and stamina improve.
<b>How hard:</b>	Any movement helps. Aim for moderate to vigorous intensity—aim to get slightly breathless. Take frequent breaks, if necessary. Expect some discomfort but not pain after your workout. Be prepared to modify your exercise plan to suit your health needs.
<b>How long:</b>	Aim to spread out sessions throughout the week. If your fitness level is low, start with 5–10 minute sessions and add 10-minute intervals until you can comfortably exercise for longer.

<b>What type:</b>	Regular walking with a health or fitness professional, providing verbal instructional cues to correct gait abnormalities, is recommended. Other suitable types are: swimming, cycling, dancing, rowing, gym machines such as the stepper and treadmills. Nordic walking and ballet are specifically advised.
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### What will it do for me?

*Regular exercise helps to prevent problems with breathing, low and high blood pressure, heart problems such as rhythm disturbances, and pneumonia, which are all major complications in Parkinson's disease.*

## Build strength

<b>How much:</b>	At least twice a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Start with light muscle strengthening exercises and progress to moderate or greater intensities over time. Strength training can help with maintaining balance in case of fatigue and to reduce falls; weight-bearing activities and free weights; and exercises that improve hand-eye coordination.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose 8–10 exercises targeting the upper and lower body and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Try 1-3 sets.
<b>What type:</b>	A variety of strength exercises using free weights, resistance machines or household items such as a can of beans or a weighted water bottle as a weight. Try backwards shoulder press, leg raises, calf raises and face exercises such as eyebrow raising/ frowning.

### What will it do for me?

*Strength exercises improve mobility, breathing, core balance and symptoms of muscle weakness.*

## Improve balance

<b>How much:</b>	At least three days a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Choose 2–3 balance exercises and repeat each exercise 10–15 times. Complete 1–3 sets of each exercise.
<b>How long:</b>	Hold each balance exercise for 10-30 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Try yoga, Tai Chi, or simple home balance exercises. Balance exercise can be done standing up, using a chair, against a wall or sitting down. Ensure the area you are exercising in and the type of balance exercise is safe. Choose specific balance exercises that avoid any risk of falling or injury. Progress to balance exercises with movement when you have gained confidence.

### What will it do for me?

*Practicing balance exercises helps to train your body to react more quickly to impending balance loss, thereby reducing the risk of falls, fractures and injuries.*



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## Flexibility exercises—stretch!

<b>How much:</b>	Aim for at least three days a week.
<b>How hard:</b>	Increase the range of exercises as you feel more comfortable. Avoid over-stretching.
<b>How long:</b>	Choose 8–10 stretch exercises and repeat 2-3 times. Hold each stretch for 10–30 seconds.
<b>What type:</b>	Every joint in your body should be taken through its complete range of motion. Try neck turns, shoulder circles, forward arm lifts, finger tuck, knee raises, elbow bends, hip swings and ankle circles.

### What will it do for me?

*Flexibility exercises decrease stiffness and increase or maintain a pain-free range of movement.*

## Sedentary living

**Reduce the amount of time being sedentary.** Move more and break up sedentary time. Sedentary behavior is defined as time spent sitting or lying with low energy expenditure, while awake in the context of occupational, educational, home and community settings, and travel. Higher amounts of sedentary behavior can increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

**Replace sedentary behavior with more physical activity of any intensity (including light intensity).** It is possible to avoid sedentary behaviour and be physically active while sitting or lying, through, for example, upper body led activities, inclusive and/or wheelchair-specific sport and activities. Try seated stretches for those with limited mobility; using active forms of transport; standing while working (within your abilities and environment), and other accessible active options to replace sedentary time.

## Your exercise, your way!

Choose activities that are easy to start with, and that you enjoy. Always exercise within your abilities. If mobility is difficult, adapted cycling, swimming and chair-based exercises may be better alternatives. Exercise with friends and family or join a group class. Try exercising both indoors and outdoors and see which you prefer. Most importantly: **some physical activity is better than none!**

## Exercise safety

If you are at risk of falling or freezing (becoming rigid), hold on to wall or sturdy chair for support, or do a chair-based exercise plan.

Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Ensure you exercise safely during balance exercises and ask for assistance if you are unsure about any exercises.

Start with shorter sessions (e.g. 10-15 minutes) and slowly build up to the recommended level. Aim to get slightly out of breath, but exercise sensibly and stop the activity if you feel unwell.

Ask for assistance with any exercises or equipment.

Consider an exercise partner. Making a commitment with a friend or co-worker will give you the extra push you need on days when your motivation is low.

Always wear comfortable clothing and shoes that give good support. Take frequent breaks if necessary, and drink water before, during and after exercise.

Choose environments that you can access freely and safely. Please ask your healthcare provider or local leisure organizations for advice on the best option for you..

## Resources

Parkinsons Canada provides exercises for people living with Parkinsons to improve posture, flexibility, balance and strength. [https://www.parkinson.ca/wp-content/uploads/Exercises\\_for\\_people\\_with\\_Parkinsons.pdf](https://www.parkinson.ca/wp-content/uploads/Exercises_for_people_with_Parkinsons.pdf) (1-800-321-1433).



Scan for more physical activity resources!

