

Understanding Parkinson's Disease

What causes the tremor of Parkinson's disease?

People with Parkinson's disease have a progressive loss of function of the nerve cells in the part of the brain that controls muscle movement. Tremors occur as a result of damage to the nerve cells.

The tremor, or "shakiness," of Parkinson's disease gets worse when the person is at rest and better when the person moves. The tremor may affect one side of the body more than the other, and can affect the lower jaw, arms and legs. Handwriting may also look "shaky" and smaller than usual. Other symptoms of Parkinson's disease include nightmares, depression, excess saliva, difficulty turning over in bed and buttoning clothes or cutting food, and problems with walking.

How is Parkinson's disease diagnosed?

No blood tests can detect Parkinson's disease. Some kinds of x-rays can help your doctor make sure nothing else is causing your symptoms, but x-rays can't show whether a person has Parkinson's disease. The symptoms mentioned above suggest to a doctor that a person might have Parkinson's disease. If the symptoms go away or get better when the person takes a medicine called levodopa, it's fairly certain that the person has Parkinson's disease.

What causes Parkinson's disease?

In general, doctors don't know what causes Parkinson's disease. Some medicines can cause or worsen symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

What medicines are used to treat Parkinson's disease?

There is no cure for Parkinson's disease. However, some medicines can help control the symptoms of the disease. Medicines used to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease include carbidopa-levodopa (Sinemet), selegiline (Eldepryl), pergolide (Permax), amantadine and trihexyphenidyl (Artane).

**Where can
I get more
information
about
Parkinson's
diseases?**



Information is available from the following organizations:

American Parkinson's Disease Association, Inc.
1250 Hylan Blvd., Suite 4B
Staten Island, NY 10305
Telephone: 800-223-2732

National Parkinson's Foundation
1501 N.W. 9th Ave., Bob Hope Road
Miami, FL 33136-1494
Telephone: 800-327-4545

Parkinson's Disease Foundation
710 W. 168th St.
New York, NY 10032
Telephone: 800-457-6676

United Parkinson's Foundation and International Tremor Foundation
833 W. Washington Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60607
Telephone: 312-733-1893

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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