

# Physical activity and Parkinson's Disease

Physical activity can help you to manage and improve your Parkinson's Disease.

## How much physical activity should I do?

To manage and improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, try to be active most days of the week.

**Aerobic, resistance, flexibility, and balance** activities training can help improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.



**Aerobic activities** work your heart and lungs, such as walking, dancing, swimming, and water aerobics.



**Resistance activities** strengthen your muscles, such as resistance bands, free weights, gardening, and sit-to-stand exercises. Even small weights can improve strength, like lifting soup cans.



**Balance and flexibility activities** can improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

## Start at a level that is right for you

When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.



This handout for adults describes:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can affect your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.

As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.

## Monitor your intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **low-intensity activity** is when you can talk or sing with ease; you do not experience any shortness of breath.
- **moderate-intensity activity** is when you can talk, but not sing.
- **vigorous-intensity activity** is when you are unable to say more than a few words before you need to pause for a breath.

Examples of low- to moderate-intensity activities are walking at different speeds, gardening, swimming, and cycling.

Examples of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activities are brisk walking, jogging, and cycling.

## Aerobic Physical Activity

Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, dancing, swimming, and water aerobics.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for aerobic activities.

*As exercising becomes easier, challenge yourself by increasing the intensity.*



## Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

### HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for *150 minutes of aerobic activity per week*. For example,
  - ▶ 10 minutes, 3 times/day for 5 days,
  - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
  - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

### HOW HARD?

Aim for a *low- to moderate-intensity* level.

Low- to moderate-intensity activity means:

- ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
- ▶ you are sweating lightly,
- ▶ your breathing is deeper and faster,
- ▶ you can talk or sing easily.

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What aerobic activities would you like to do?

## Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as using free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

### Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at any duration and intensity, and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

*Start at any duration and intensity, and slowly increase them as you feel comfortable.*



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

## Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

### HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 bicep curls.
- Aim for:
  - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
  - ▶ 2–3 sets of *each* exercise per session,
  - ▶ 20–40 minutes per session,
  - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

### HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
  - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
  - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
  - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
  - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
  - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

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What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

## Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Practice doing *two activities at the same time*, such as walking for two minutes while holding a conversation with another person, naming objects, or subtracting a random number by 3. The primary focus is on your balance while walking. Stop if you notice your balance or walking pattern changes.

### Balance Physical Activity Prescription

#### HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 30 seconds of holding your balance
- 15 minutes per session,
- 5 days per week.

#### HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity* level. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

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What balance physical activities would you like to do?

## Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective. Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

### Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

#### HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10–15 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

#### HOW HARD?

- Stretch to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain) and hold the stretch.
- Build up to holding stretches for 30 seconds.

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What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity. For example, a physiotherapist can teach you exercises and stretches to do at home to improve posture, strength, flexibility, and endurance. A physical or occupational therapist can help you move more efficiently in your daily living activities (such as bathing and dressing) so that these activities are easier and less tiring.

## How does physical activity help my symptoms of Parkinson's Disease?

Being physically active has many benefits for your health. It can strengthen your muscles, and improve your endurance, balance, mobility, walking distance and speed, step length, and postural stability. Physical activity can also lessen the impact of Parkinson's Disease symptoms, such as tremors, imbalance, and stiffness.

### Short-term

- improve balance and walking coordination, and
- improve your endurance to participate in daily activities.

### Long-term

- decrease the risk of falling, and
- minimize the impact of the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease on your daily life.

## Heart Rate



When you are doing an aerobic activity, your heart rate will increase. Be sure to ask your doctor about a healthy heart rate range for you before beginning. Keep in mind that exercises may be hard when you start, but they will get easier as you continue to do them.

Physical activity can improve your endurance, balance, mobility, walking distance and speed, step length, and postural stability.



## More benefits

Being physically active on a regular basis can give you many other benefits, such as:

-  improving your quality of life,
-  improving how well you sleep,
-  improving your mental health, including your ability to think, focus and retain information,
-  reducing your risk of falling,
-  improving your mood,
-  boosting your energy.

## Remember:

- A combination of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility activities can help you manage and improve your symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Make physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

- Topics in this toolkit:
- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
  - B. Making a physical activity plan
  - C. Setting goals for physical activity
  - D. What stops you from being physically active?
  - E. Benefits of physical activity
  - F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
  - G. High blood pressure safety
  - H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
  - I. Diabetes safety
  - J. Healthy weight and physical activity
  - K. Physical activity and anxiety
  - L. Anxiety safety
  - M. Physical activity and chronic heart failure
  - N. Chronic heart failure safety
  - O. Physical activity and stroke
  - P. Stroke safety
  - Q. Physical activity and Parkinson's Disease
  - R. Parkinson's Disease safety
  - S. Physical activity and dementia
  - T. Dementia safety