

HEALTH AWARENESS

April 2022

PARKINSON'S DISEASE



April is Parkinson's Disease awareness month. Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement. Symptoms worsen over time and generally start with tremors, stiffness, or slowing of movement. Nearly one million people in the United States and an estimated 10 million worldwide live with PD. These estimates do not account for cases of PD that are unreported, undiagnosed, or misdiagnosed. The cause is unknown, and although there is presently no cure, there are treatment options such as medication and surgery to manage symptoms.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE CAUSES

Parkinson's involves the malfunction and death of vital nerve cells in the brain called neurons. Parkinson's primarily affects neurons in an area of the brain called the substantia nigra. Some of these dying neurons produce dopamine, a chemical that sends messages to the part of the brain that controls movement and

coordination. As PD progresses, the amount of dopamine produced in the brain decreases, leaving a person unable to control movement normally.

SYMPTOMS OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Primary motor signs of Parkinson's disease are the following:

- tremor of hands, arms, legs, jaw, and face
- bradykinesia or slowness of movement
- rigidity or stiffness of the limbs and trunk
- postural instability
- impaired balance/coordination

While motor symptoms are commonly associated with PD, non-motor symptoms are often more disruptive. They can include apathy, depression, constipation, sleep behavior disorders, loss of sense of smell, problems chewing or swallowing, and cognitive impairment. Many of these symptoms can be treated with medications.

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MEDICATIONS & TREATMENTS

There are many medications available to treat PD symptoms, although none yet reverse the disease's effects. It is common for people with PD to take a variety of these medications – all at different doses and at different times of day – in order to manage the symptoms. While keeping track of medications can be a challenge, understanding the medications and sticking to a schedule will provide the most significant benefit from the drugs and avoid unpleasant “off” periods due to missed doses.

Surgical treatment options also exist, such as deep brain stimulation. Electrodes are implanted into a specific part of the brain and connected to a generator implanted in the chest near the collarbone. The electrodes send electrical pulses to the brain and may reduce your PD symptoms.

LIVING WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Lifestyle changes can help improve the quality of life for people with PD. A healthy diet and regular exercise can slow and help manage disease symptoms. A high-fiber diet can help manage digestive issues, while exercise can improve flexibility and balance.

Living with a chronic illness is difficult and can cause feelings of depression and frustration. Medications and support groups can help. Talk to your doctor about available resources. 

Source: www.parkinson.org

BENEFITS CORNER



DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Your County Health Plan (CHP) benefits cover durable medical equipment (DME) prescribed by an in-network PPO vendor or provider. DME is any equipment that generally can withstand repeated use, must serve a medical purpose, and is appropriate for use in the home, such as a cane, walker, wheelchair, or oxygen and other breathing devices, like a CPAP machine.

The DME will be rented or purchased at the Plan's option. Rental costs must not be more than the purchase price and will be applied to the purchase price. Repair of medical equipment, maintenance, and adjustment because of normal usage is covered if the equipment has been purchased by the Plan or would have been approved by the Plan. During repair or maintenance of DME, the Plan will provide benefits for replacement rental equipment. DME used as part of an inpatient admission is covered as part of the inpatient hospital admission. Consult your plan documents for more information on coverage for DME.

As always, CHP staff is here to assist you with your health, dental, vision, or life insurance coverage. You can reach us at 303 861 0507.

