

## **Parkinson Disease: Exercise Fact Sheet**

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People with Parkinson disease (PD) benefit from staying active and mobile. Fitness needs, however, depend on the stage of the disease and also on other health conditions. An appropriate exercise plan must take into account issues of flexibility, walking, balance, posture and blood pressure. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends that people with PD include aerobic conditioning, strength training, stretching, functional exercises and exercises geared toward Parkinson symptoms.

Recent Parkinson research has shown that higher intensity exercise may result in improved function and also slowed disease progression. These programs may make you work harder than traditional exercise, so it is important to check with your doctor first, and to begin high-intensity training with the assistance of a physical therapist or trained exercise professional.

### **Aerobic Conditioning**

Participating in conditioning exercise such as walking for endurance or using an exercise bike can help improve overall fitness and health. A doctor, therapist or trainer can help determine target heart rate to ensure a good workout.

### **Strength Training**

Strength training can be performed using weight machines, resistance tubing/bands, body weight or household objects such as a milk jug. Standing on the toes and small knee bends are exercises that can improve leg strength, as well as balance and functional mobility. Shoulder blade squeezes and chin tucks can help improve strength and posture.

### **Stretching**

People with PD can become rigid, which makes everyday activities like rolling over in bed and dressing more difficult. A good trunk stretch: lie in bed on the back with knees bent; allow the knees to extend to the side and stretch the back.

### **Functional Exercises**

In order to maintain or improve functional abilities, practice the activities that are getting more difficult. For example, practice standing up from a chair 10 times, or rolling from side to side in a bed.

### **Parkinson Specific Exercises**

Due to changes in the brain, PD can cause difficulty with balance, walking and posture. This can lead to increased falls, taking smaller steps or difficulty standing straight. A physical therapist

can help design an exercise program that addresses all these issues.

**References**

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National Parkinson's Foundation. "Fitness Counts" Booklet. Download for free at [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org)

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