

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Parkinson's disease (also known as PD or Parkinson's) is a disorder caused by the loss of nerve cells in the brain that help transmit messages responsible for movement.

Parkinson's is a chronic, progressive disease, meaning that it persists over time and symptoms tend to get worse over time. Symptoms usually show up after age 50.

As many as 1 million Americans and as many as 10 million people worldwide have Parkinson's, and an estimated 60,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

The disease is named after James Parkinson, the first to specifically describe Parkinson's.

SYMPTOMS

The primary signs that a person has Parkinson's include:

- Tremor or trembling in the hands, arms, legs, jaw and face.
- Slowness of movement, known as bradykinesia.
- Rigidity or stiffness of the limbs and trunk.
- Instability of posture, or impaired balance and coordination.
- The severity of the symptoms typically differs from person to person.

CAUSES

Researchers so far have been unable to determine the exact cause of Parkinson's. They believe it results from genetic factors, environmental factors or both.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of Parkinson's can be difficult because there are no blood or lab tests that have proven consistently effective in identifying the disease. A detailed medical history and a neurological examination are necessary to determine whether a person has Parkinson's. Brain imaging is also used in select cases.

TREATMENT

There is no cure for Parkinson's, but medications and surgical procedures can help control the symptoms. In some cases, a course of medication is prescribed to improve brain function as it relates to movement. A surgical procedure called deep brain stimulation has proven helpful for some patients, particularly those who suffer severe tremors, but it does not slow the disease's development.

RESOURCES

UK HealthCare and the American Parkinson's Disease Association have partnered to create the **Kentucky Parkinson's Disease Information and Referral Center**. The center provides physician and service referrals and educational programs, and it develops and maintains support groups across the state. The center also hosts patient and caregiver information sessions.

ukhealthcare.uky.edu/kni/apda
859-257-2732

Parkinson's Disease Foundation:

www.pdf.org

800-457-6676

American Parkinson Disease Association:

www.apdaparkinson.org

800-223-2732