



Get Moving!

Helping People with Parkinson's Move

Parkinson's is a degenerative disease...

that can be overwhelming, but there's hope if you get engaged in your health for 1-2 hours a day. Medicine can only go so far and unfortunately the best medicines for Parkinson's disease have side effects. Alongside whatever medicine regimen you have, I'd like to suggest an additional approach; there is a combination of actions you could take that can improve your quality of life. It's called the "Get Moving Plan."

"Get Moving Plan"

1. Choose life.

It sounds simple but it's absolutely necessary. Life is good. I encourage you to maintain perspective and look at the big picture. If you feel sorry for yourself, snap out of it. Studies show that a positive outlook increases life expectancy and even decreases heart attacks. Yale University researchers discovered that a positive outlook increases your life an average of 7 1/2 years.¹

2. Use specialists.

There are over 100 neurological disorders. Use a movement disorder specialist² focused on the fast pace of developments in Parkinson's research and a physical therapist specialized in Parkinson's to develop an exercise and stretching plan just for you. Don't settle for less.

3. Challenge yourself daily.

You become motivated and excited when challenged. Life is more interesting and colorful. It gives you hope. Remember, your best days are ahead of you!

4. Get 'Out of the closet.'

It's common for a person with a degenerative disease to feel overwhelmed, not want to be treated differently, not to mention the difficulties in finding the perfect time to tell your community. Get out of the closet – tell your community. The benefit is that every time you leave your house you won't have to make an extra effort to mask your symptoms plus you'll have a community ready to support you. The outcome will almost always be less stress in your life and more support³. A win-win.

5. Mind over matter.

If you had to choose between a deteriorating mind or a failing body, the choice is clear. Your mind is more important! Invariably, no matter how hard you exercise there will be some deterioration, but keep it in perspective and as you have opportunity avail yourself of adaptive devices, such as a walking cane. Engage your brain. Exercise with games like crosswords and Sudoku.

6. Exercise daily.

It's important to maintain strength and balance. Workout a minimum 1-2 hours daily. Exercise may include weight lifting, walking, bicycling, boxing, pilates, dancing, etc. Research has shown that exercise can improve gait, balance, tremor, flexibility, grip strength, motor coordination and improved mobility decreasing the risk of falling³. People who exercise intensely⁴ have fewer changes in their brains caused by aging. Studies⁵ show that Parkinson's disease is improved by exercise.

The key word here is intensity. By all means start slowly but make sure you include some intensity in your workout. No excuses, get moving!



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7. Stretch twice daily

Use Parkinson specific stretches that focus on strengthening squatting muscles, stretching the chest and shoulders with arms and hands stretching outwards and balance type exercises. Research shows that stretching increases strength, balance and flexibility. Practice good posture. You will be stunned by the results.

8. Leave your house daily

Get out of the house daily! Participate in your community and be supported by the community. Humans are social creatures.

9. Renovate your home.

Renovate your home focusing on fall prevention and accessibility. There's no need to struggle at home. Make your home easy with things like grab bars, a seat in the shower, bench to sit and put on your shoes, etc.

10. Use adaptive devices

Use every aid available to take care of yourself and help you stay engaged in your community. We are lucky to live in the era of high tech devices. Use them!

Life is good and you can control your Parkinson's for a long and happy life, but its completely in your hands. Make the "Get Moving plan" a part of your everyday life. Below is a link to the plan.

Footnotes:

1. Positive thinking 'extends life'. BBC. Monday 7/29/17. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/2158336.stm>
2. A movement disorder specialist is a neurologist who has received additional training in Parkinson's disease (PD) and other movement disorders including dystonia, chorea, tics and tremors. Whereas a general neurologist may treat patients with any of more than 100 neurological conditions, a movement disorder specialist focuses primarily on Parkinson's disease and movement disorders. <https://www.partnersinparkinsons.org/movement-disorder-specialists>
3. Universite de Montreal. "Health benefits of coming out of the closet demonstrated." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 29 January 2013. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/01/130129074427.htm>.
4. Beth Fisher, et al. The Effect of Exercise Training in Improving Performance and Corticomotor Excitability in People with Early Parkinson's. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Vol 89, July 2008
5. Jay Alberts. Forced Exercise with Theracycle Parkinson's Disease Bikes - A Cleveland Clinic Research Study. Neurorehabil Neural Repair. 2009 Jul-Aug;23(6):600-8. Epub 2009 Jan 8.
6. Gerecke KM, Jiao Y, Pani A, Pagala V and Smeyne RJ (2010) Exercise protects against MPTP-induced neurotoxicity in mice. Brain Research, 1341: 72-83. Epub 2010 Jan 29.