



**Understanding  
Parkinson's  
disease**



Parkinson's  
Australia



Parkinson's  
Australia



## Facts about Parkinson's disease

- *Parkinson's is one of the most common brain conditions in Australia.*
- *25 people are diagnosed every day.*
- *It is more common among people aged over 60 years, but it can affect adults of any age.*
- *It does not cause death and many people live a long and productive life with Parkinson's.*
- *It affects both men and women from all cultures and lifestyles.*
- *It is not contagious, so you can not catch it or pass it on to someone else.*
- *It is not usually hereditary.*
- *We do not know what its causes are.*
- *Medications help to control symptoms, but there is no known cure.*
- *New and better treatments and medications are being researched.*



## What is Parkinson's disease?

Parkinson's disease is a condition that affects movement. People with Parkinson's have problems controlling the muscles of the body due to a breakdown of messages from the brain.

We do not know its causes, but people with Parkinson's have low levels of a brain chemical called dopamine. Dopamine helps the brain to control the muscles and move the body smoothly and easily.

Over time, people with Parkinson's have less and less dopamine, making movement more and more difficult.

Parkinson's progresses slowly. It may take many years before symptoms begin to cause major problems with daily life. When they do, many of these symptoms can be managed with treatment and support.



**People with  
Parkinson's disease can  
continue to enjoy a long and  
productive life.**



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## Treatment

It is very important that people with Parkinson's see a specialist doctor such as a neurologist for advice on available medications and ongoing monitoring.

Other health workers can provide support, information, treatment and therapies to help with daily living.



## How does it affect people?

Parkinson's affects each person differently and symptoms can vary on different days.

The main symptoms are:

- Shaking or trembling.
- Stiff or tight muscles.
- Slow movement or difficulty starting or stopping a movement.
- Balance problems or difficulty standing up straight.

Parkinson's can cause problems with daily activities such as walking, getting out of a chair or turning over in bed. It can also affect small movements such as writing, typing, shaving or buttoning up clothes.

Other common problems include: tiredness, depression, constipation, difficulty speaking or swallowing and problems doing more than one thing at a time.



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## Parkinson's Australia can help

Our specialist health workers can give support and information over the phone or in person.

We help people with Parkinson's, their families, friends and carers.

We have information and Help Sheets in various languages covering many topics.

We run regular information sessions for people to come and learn more.

We can put you in touch with other people in your community who are living with Parkinson's.

We can give you information about where to go for further help in your area.



For information and  
support

Parkinson's Australia

**1800 644 189**

**[www.parkinsons.org.au](http://www.parkinsons.org.au)**



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Or contact your local Parkinson's disease  
support organisation:



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