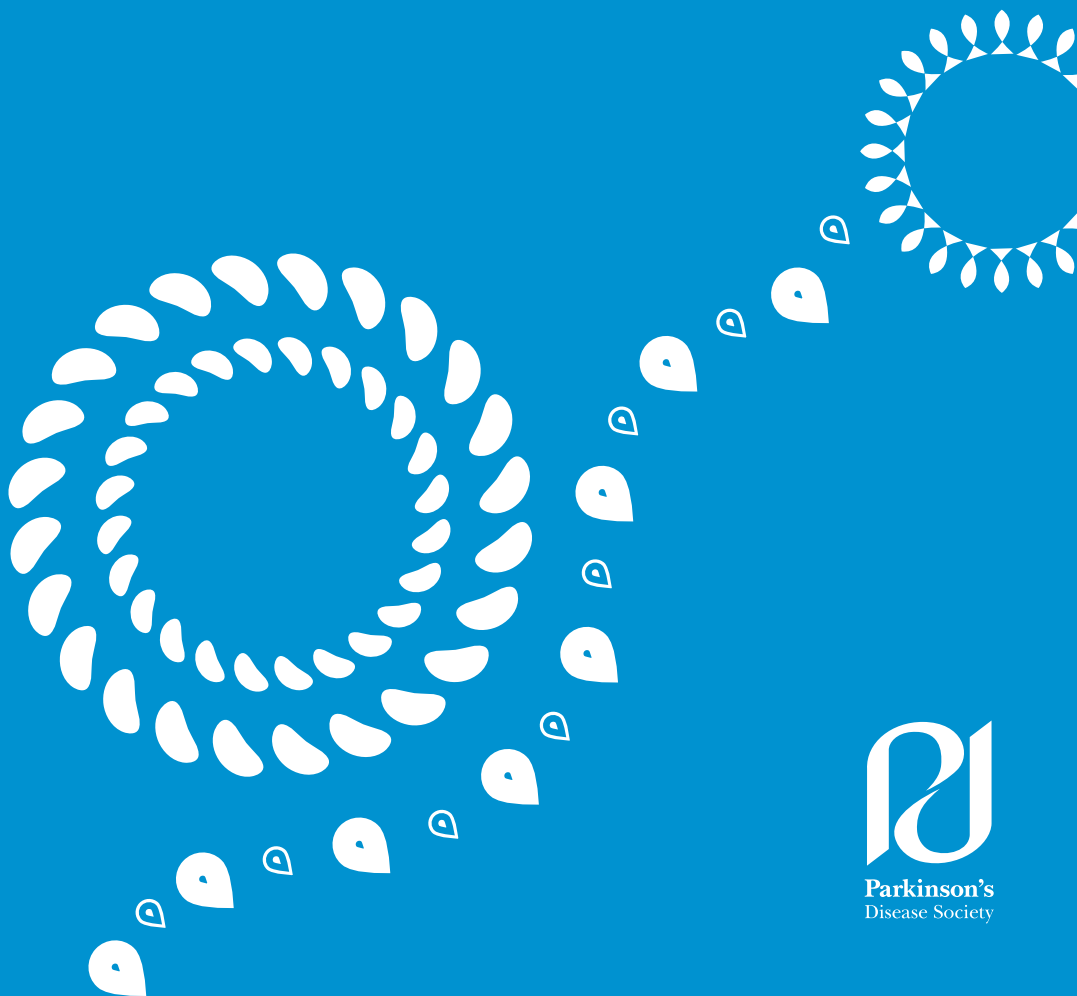


Parkinson's and Diet



Parkinson's
Disease Society

About the Parkinson's Disease Society

The Parkinson's Disease Society (PDS) works with people with Parkinson's, their carers, families and friends, and health and social care professionals to provide support, information and advice. We are committed to investing in research, education and campaigning to improve the lives of people affected by the condition. The PDS has over 30,000 members, and more than 330 branches, support groups and special interest groups throughout the UK.

For more details on the friendly support, relevant information and expert advice that becoming a member can provide, including details of our membership magazine, *The Parkinson*, please call 020 7932 1344 or email membership@parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's Disease Society

215 Vauxhall Bridge Road

London SW1V 1EJ

Helpline: 0808 800 0303 Text Relay 18001 0808 800 0303

(for textphone users only). (The Helpline is a confidential service.

Calls are free from UK landlines and some mobile networks.)

Email: enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk www.parkinsons.org.uk

How you can help us

We are totally dependent on voluntary donations so if you would like to make a contribution, it would be gratefully received.

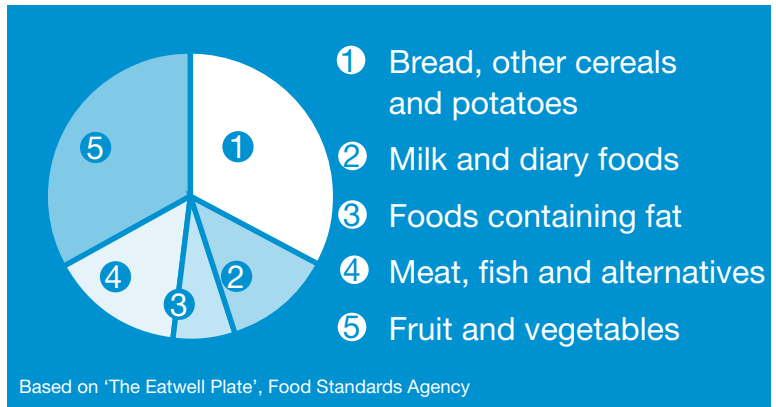
Any money received will help us support others affected by Parkinson's through information, care and research. To make a donation, please call 020 7932 1303, visit www.parkinsons.org.uk/donate or write to Parkinson's Disease Society, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ. Thank you.

Getting the right nourishment is an important part of looking after your health. If you have Parkinson's, you may need to take a little extra care.

This booklet provides advice on how to get the right balance of nutrients from the different food groups. It provides information and advice about particular problems that people with Parkinson's may experience, such as constipation, changes in weight and appetite, and difficulty in swallowing. It also looks at some questions people ask about food in relation to drugs and Parkinson's.

Finally it also tells you where to find further help, should you require it.

A balanced diet



What should I eat?

Enjoy a wide variety of foods each day. Use the pie chart above to plan regular meals. Choose foods from the different groups each day to make sure you are eating as healthily as possible.

Food groups

Starchy foods

Each of your meals and snacks should have starchy food, such as bread, potatoes, rice, chapatis, yams, pasta, noodles, oats, cornmeal, crackers, toast and breakfast cereals.

Fruit and vegetables

Aim for five servings of fruit and vegetables each day. Choose from fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables. Visit the NHS website www.5aday.nhs.uk for tips and advice.

Dairy products

Aim for three to five servings of milk and dairy foods each day. A serving is a third of a pint of milk, one small pot of

yoghurt, or a small matchbox portion of cheese (reduced-fat or full-fat varieties of milk and yoghurt will give you calcium).

Meat, fish and alternatives

Aim for two to three servings each day from this group. Choose from red or white meat, white or oily fish, eggs, beans, pulses and nuts (unless you have an allergy), and cooked as desired. If you have difficulty in swallowing, smooth peanut butter is a useful option. Lamb, beef, eggs, beans and pulses will also provide essential dietary iron.

Fatty and sugary foods

These foods can be eaten in moderation. (See 'A healthy weight', below, if weight control is a problem.)

Fluids

It is very important to drink plenty of fluids. Aim for eight to ten cups (six to eight mugs/glasses) each day of water, fruit juice, squash, tea, coffee, milk etc. Eating more fruits that are juicy, such as melon, will also help increase your fluid intake.

Alcohol

Unless you have been advised by your doctor not to drink alcohol, a small amount (eg sherry, wine or beer) does no harm and may be beneficial, especially if it encourages a normal social life.

How often should I eat?

Try to have three meals a day, or four smaller ones. In each meal include foods from the different groups.

A healthy weight

It is important for everybody to maintain an optimum body weight. Being overweight or, more commonly in Parkinson's, underweight can have effects on your health.

It is easy to gain weight when you become less active, and are perhaps eating the same amount of food. However, it is still important to eat a variety of different foods.

How can I keep to a healthy weight?

Below are some tips on how to reduce the energy content of your diet sensibly:

- Try not to eat fried foods daily – the same food can be grilled or cooked another way, without adding fat – for example bake, steam or microwave.
- Cakes, biscuits and pastries all have a lot of sugar and fat in them. Try and cut down the number of times you eat these.
- Sweets and chocolate also contain a lot of calories. Avoid snacking on these between meals.
- Take care with sugary drinks such as cola, cordials etc. There will usually be a ‘sugar free’ or ‘low calorie’ choice that would be suitable

It is still important to have three healthy meals a day to provide all the nutrients and goodness you need.

If you would like help on dieting, speak to your GP, or ask to see a registered dietitian.

I find I am underweight – what can I do?

You may find you are underweight, and have difficulty putting weight on. Sometimes, weight loss can be due to practical problems to do with food preparation and keeping your food hot while you are eating (see ‘Food shopping and preparation’ for tips). Or it can be to do with poor swallowing (see ‘Advice on eating and swallowing’).

If you are underweight, the following advice may be useful, or ask to see a registered dietitian for assistance.

- Try to have three meals a day and two to three snacks in between. (See ‘Eating plan’.) It is important to try to eat every two to three hours during the day, or at least have a milk shake, malted drink or smoothie. Nutritious drink sachets can be purchased from chemists and supermarkets.
- Full-fat pasteurised milk is an excellent drink and can be used in cooking. To make it even more effective, add three to four tablespoons of milk powder to a pint of full-fat milk, and drink at least one pint every day.

(NB Be aware that milk can thicken the saliva. Please discuss this with a dietitian and speech and language therapist before making changes)

- Make the most of adding ‘extras’ to foods, such as extra cream, butter, or sugar/honey. These will make the food more energy dense, and tasty!

Constipation

Many people with Parkinson’s find constipation a problem. This can be helped by:

- increasing your fluid intake
- taking exercise
- increasing your intake of fibre-rich foods

How does fibre help?

Fibre works by absorbing fluid as it moves through your bowel, forming a soft stool that can be passed more easily. However, be careful, because too much bulk can increase constipation, especially if you don’t drink enough. You require eight to ten cups (or six to eight mugs) of fluid daily.

How to increase your fibre intake

Fibre is found in cereal grains, seeds, nuts, fruit, vegetables and pulses, e.g. peas, beans and lentils. (Loose, extra bran which can be added on to your food, is *not* recommended: it can lead to bloating and can also reduce the absorption of vitamins and minerals.)

- Include high-fibre varieties of foods, e.g. wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta, basmati or brown rice. Recipes can be adapted to use some wholemeal flour instead of all white.
- Include a breakfast cereal containing wheat, wheatbran or oats e.g. Weetabix, porridge, Branflakes.
- Increase your intake of all kinds of vegetables: raw or cooked, fresh or frozen. Use more peas, beans or lentils.
- Increase your intake of fruit: Fresh, stewed, tinned or dried, e.g. bananas, oranges, prunes

When increasing your intake of fibre, it is important to do so gradually to avoid bloating or flatulence (wind). Introduce one new fibre food every three days.

For more information about managing constipation, see the information sheet *Constipation and Parkinson's* (code FS80).

Fluids

How much fluid should I drink?

It is essential to drink plenty throughout the day, to help the fibre to do its work. Aim to drink eight to ten cups (six to eight mugs/ glasses) every day. Any fluid is suitable, e.g. water, fruit juice, milk, tea, coffee, squashes or fizzy drinks. (NB Fizzy drinks can make some people feel bloated.)

Eating plan

What should I be eating?

Good nutrition in Parkinson's involves eating regularly, and eating a wide range of foods. A sample eating plan is given below. Choose from:

- Breakfast:** Fruit or fruit juice; cereal and milk (and sugar if desired); bread/toast with butter/margarine/preserves/honey as desired; egg, bacon, sausage, cheese, beans etc; drink, e.g. tea, coffee, milk
- Midday meal:** Meat, fish, eggs or cheese or alternative; potato, sweet potato, yam, rice, pasta or bread/toast; vegetables; milk pudding, yoghurt, custard or fruit drink
- Evening meal:** Soup or fruit juice; meat, fish, eggs; beans or lentils, potato, rice, pasta, chapati or bread; salad or vegetables; milk pudding, yoghurt, sponge or pie and custard/ice cream, jelly or mousse
- Between meals:** Have a drink between meals, as well as with them, e.g. tea, coffee, soup, fruit juice, squash, milk, water etc. Snacks can be fruit, biscuits, sandwiches, crackers and spread, buns, scones, breakfast cereals and milk etc

Midday and evening meals are interchangeable.

Medication

When should I take my Parkinson's medications?

The exact timing of taking your Parkinson's drugs will always depend on your individual medication. You should discuss this

in full with your GP or Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist (if you have one).

Food, particularly protein, can interfere with the absorption of anti-Parkinson's drugs, particularly levodopa. The timing of taking medications with respect to food should be discussed with your GP, or you can ask to be referred to a registered dietitian.

Sipping a cold drink, such as water, squash or juice, helps with swallowing tablets. However, it is advised that you don't take your Parkinson's medication with milk (see next section).

The role of protein

Can protein affect my medication?

In some people, protein (which is found mainly in meat, fish, eggs, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, beans and pulses) seems to interfere with the effectiveness of their levodopa medication. These people may, therefore, benefit from taking their levodopa 45 minutes before meals (ideally with a carbohydrate food like a cracker or biscuit).

Tests restricting the intake of daytime protein have been tried by people with serious Parkinson's symptoms and, in some cases, they have shown an improvement in their response to levodopa.

A protein redistribution diet, whereby most of the daily recommended dietary protein is taken in the evening, therefore may be worth considering if you are experiencing major difficulties. However, *do not* reduce the amount of protein you eat; it is vital to help your body to renew itself and fight infection, and reduction can cause dangerous weight loss.

If you do wish to review the timing of your protein intake, please first discuss it with your GP, or ask to see a registered dietitian.

Can I take antacids?

Antacids (eg Rennie or Milk of Magnesia, which are used to relieve discomfort in disorders of the digestive system) should preferably not be taken at the same time as other drugs, since they may impair absorption.

Vitamins, minerals and antioxidants

Eating a well-balanced diet, as recommended in this booklet, will provide adequate levels of vitamins and minerals for most people. Food contains fibre and other valuable nutrients, as well as vitamins and minerals. So, if you feel you need more of a particular vitamin or mineral, it is generally advised that you eat more of the appropriate foods, rather than buy expensive vitamin and mineral supplements.

Some vitamins, when taken in large doses can cause severe side effects. If you are taking supplements with high doses of vitamins and minerals or need further advice on this matter generally, it is highly recommended that you see a registered dietitian or your GP.

Vitamin B6

In the past, Vitamin B6 tended to accelerate the conversion of the anti-Parkinson's drug levodopa, turning it to dopamine before it reached and could be used by the brain. Today, most levodopa medications contain an inhibitor of this conversion, so levodopa is converted to dopamine where it should be – in the brain. The level of Vitamin B6 in a normal diet should not be a concern, although it would be wise to avoid excessive amounts, unless prescribed by your GP.

Vitamin E

An initial pilot study suggested that Vitamin E might delay the progression of Parkinson's, but a later more detailed study involving a much greater number of patients failed to confirm this.

Antioxidants

Oxidation is a normal process which occurs in all cells of the body. A substance produced from this process is known to cause damage and play a part in the development of diseases such as heart disease, cancer and Parkinson's.

Antioxidants (known as free radical scavengers) are a group of vitamins and minerals that can help lessen the damage caused by oxidation. Currently, there is no evidence that they will slow the progression of Parkinson's or provide an increased effect of drugs. Again, providing you are consuming a well-balanced diet, your antioxidant vitamin intake will be covered. If you want to take additional antioxidant vitamins, e.g. A, C, and E, and/or have concerns, ask to see a registered dietitian via your GP. Taking excessive amounts of antioxidant vitamin supplements can adversely affect your health and wellbeing, and may interfere with your Parkinson's medication. See the information sheet *Antioxidants* (code FS67).

What about Co-enzyme Q10?

Co-enzyme Q10, which is naturally present in very small amounts in a wide range of foods – particularly protein foods – has potent anti-oxidant properties. Studies of people who are receiving large doses as a supplement, suggest that, at present, co-enzyme Q10 is not recommended as a treatment for Parkinson's. See the information sheet *Co-enzyme Q10* (code FS74).

Food supplements

Do I need to take food supplements?

The same advice as for vitamin and mineral supplements applies to food supplements: if you are a healthy weight for your height then food supplements may not be necessary. However, if you are not managing to eat enough food, for example due to nausea, loss of appetite, increased movement or if you are underweight, then food supplements can be useful to boost your nutritional intake.

There is a wide range of nutritional support products – drinks, powders and desserts – available. These should be introduced by a registered dietitian and/or prescribed by your GP.

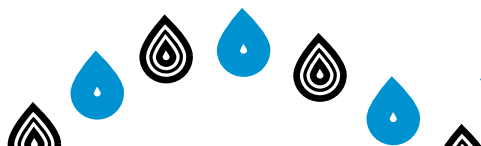
Special diets

Can fava beans improve my Parkinson's symptoms?

Fava beans (or broad beans) are the beans of the *vicia faba* plant. All parts of the plant contain levodopa, a drug that is commonly used to treat Parkinson's. The PDS receives many enquiries about fava beans and the possibility of using them as a treatment for Parkinson's, either instead of or as a supplement to the drugs that are currently available.

As far as our medical advisers are aware, there have been no comprehensive scientific research trials into fava beans and Parkinson's. Information on these beans and their effect on Parkinson's is limited and largely based on anecdotal information.

We are aware that some websites do give prescriptive advice, but the PDS cannot endorse or recommend people with Parkinson's follow this advice in the absence of rigorous scientific trials. It is imperative that anyone who is considering trying these beans discusses this first with their GP.



Food shopping and preparation

The way you buy, store, prepare and cook food may need a little rethinking. It is recommended that you seek advice from an occupational therapist, who can advise you on all aspects of food shopping and preparation, including kitchen and shopping aids.

Here are some tips:

- Plan meals in advance, making a shopping list of all the ingredients you need.
- When planning meals, decide how long you can stand at a cooker without becoming tired.
- Consider buying ready prepared foods, e.g. frozen vegetables (they are just as nutritious as fresh) and tinned fish, meat or beans. Ready meals can save time, your energy, gas, electricity and food wastage.
- Keep a wide supply of food in your store cupboard and freezer.
- At supermarkets, look out for special trolleys designed to make shopping easier for people with disabilities.
- If possible, consider buying a microwave; they are very versatile and take a only few minutes to cook meals and heat up drinks.
- If you like a nap in the afternoon, keep hot water in a flask on a tray with a tea bag, milk, sugar etc. Drinking regularly helps to keep you warm.
- Contact your local PDS branch which can tell you about shopping services/volunteers etc in your area.
- You may be entitled to meals on wheels or home delivery of frozen meals; contact the home care organiser of your social services

Dishes and cutlery

Should I buy special utensils?

A variety of adapted utensils for eating and drinking are available and may be worth considering (see 'Further information and resources' for contact details). However, it is strongly

recommended that you seek the advice of an occupational therapist before going to the expense of buying specialised items:

Cutlery – Specialised cutlery is available in various shapes and sizes. Cutlery with enlarged or weighted handles, or handles which are angled rather than straight, may be useful.

Cups and mugs – Use a large mug for drinks, but only half full. Two-handled cups can help improve grip and reduce the chance of spillage. Special ‘tumble-not’ mugs are available with wide, non-slip bases and tall necks. (The PDS stocks these.)

Plates – A ‘stay-warm plate’ might be useful if it takes you a long time to eat, or you could have smaller, but more frequent meals. A damp cloth placed under a plate will stop it from slipping, or special mats can be used. High-lipped plates are available that prevent spillage and make it easier to draw food onto the fork or spoon. Similarly, plate guards can be bought that clip on to your usual plates.

Equipment – Equipment is also available to help with opening jars and bottles. See the information sheet *Equipment and Disability Aids (code FS59)*.

Advice on eating and swallowing

Ensure you are comfortable at meal times. To make it easier to eat, you may find the following advice helpful:

- Take your time. Eat in a comfortable, quiet environment. However, if you feel you are taking too long and food is getting cold, consider eating smaller more frequent meals, or food that is easier to eat.
- Try eating in the recommended position – sitting upright in a chair with both feet on the floor and the arm you are not using resting on the table.

- Try planning your meals for when your medication is working. Avoid attempting large meals when you are 'off'.
- Some people feel their throats tense up while eating and food 'sticks in the throat'. Try yawning before the meal to relax the throat

What can I do to aid swallowing?

Some people find certain foods difficult to chew or swallow or have difficulty in opening their mouths. If this is the case, you may consider a semi-solid diet. However, before doing so you should speak to a speech and language therapist, your GP or a registered dietitian, who will be able to advise you; this is because not all swallowing problems are to do with Parkinson's and it is vital you confirm the cause of your problem before changing your diet. They can also advise on the best consistency/texture of food and liquid for you.

Semi-solid foods are usually easier to swallow than foods with mixed textures or very hard/dry foods.

Some tips on easier swallowing:

- Try slightly thicker creamy soups rather than thin watery ones, or those with 'bits' in.
- Meat that is tough or chewy can be difficult. Try moistening with a gravy or sauce, or try fish, which is usually softer (though be wary of very bony fish).
- Try mashed potato, pasta or noodles as a change from bread.
- White bread can get stuck around the mouth; try wholemeal bread with a dip, sauce or smooth peanut butter.
- Try soft moist biscuits, such as sponge fingers or mini rolls, rather than drier crackers and toast.
- Having a drink with your meal makes chewing and swallowing easier. Sipping iced water particularly, including before beginning to eat, may help the 'strength' of your swallow.

- Good posture and a comfortable position while eating will also aid swallowing.
- Try taking smaller mouthfuls.
- If you wear dentures, make sure they fit properly

Should I try a purée diet?

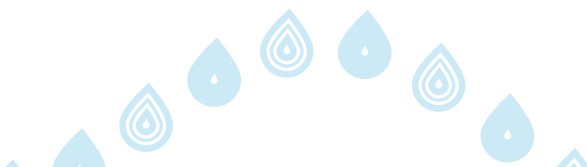
If swallowing is extremely difficult, again, seek advice from a speech and language therapist, your GP or a registered dietitian. They may suggest a purée diet.

Some tips on a purée diet:

- If foods are being liquidised or puréed, always use a milk-based sauce or gravy, rather than water. This will increase the nutrients and energy of the meal.
- Do not use baby foods; although they may be the right texture, they are not nutritionally adequate for adults.
- Thickening agents can be added to liquidised or puréed food to add back some of the texture. Suitable thickeners include milk powder, instant potato powder, custard powder or plain yoghurt. Other thickening agents can be bought or are available from your GP, e.g. Thick 'n' Easy, Thixo D, Vitaquick and Nutilis. Moulds are also available which allow specially thickened food to retain their 'normal' food appearance.

Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and registered dietitians can also advise further on diet, utensils and eating techniques. See the information sheet *Eating, Swallowing and Saliva Control in Parkinson's* (code FS22) for further details.

Further information and advice on Parkinson's and related subjects is available from the Parkinson's Disease Society (PDS). See the inside front cover of this booklet for contact details.



The PDS produces a wide range of booklets and information sheets about living with Parkinson's. These include the following resources related to eating and diet:

Booklets (code number in brackets):

Looking after your Bladder and Bowels in Parkinsonism (B060)

Parkinson's and Dental Health (B045)

The Drug Treatment of Parkinson's Disease (B013)

Information sheets (code number in brackets):

Antioxidants and Parkinson's (FS67)

Co-enzyme Q10 (FS74)

Eating, Swallowing and Saliva Control in Parkinson's (FS22)

Equipment and Disability Aids (FS59)

Motor Fluctuations in Parkinson's (FS73)

Occupational Therapy and Parkinson's (FS97)

Speech and Language Therapy (FS07)

To order any of these, or to request a full list of all products, please contact our distributor:

Sharward Services Ltd
Westerfield Business Centre
Main Road
Westerfield, Ipswich
Suffolk IP6 9AB
Tel: 01473 212115
Fax: 01473 212114
Email: parkinsons@sharward.co.uk

What about specialised equipment?

For advice on where to obtain specialised utensils, please contact:

Disabled Living Foundation
380–384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Helpline (local rate charge): 0845 130 9177
Textphone: 020 7432 8009 (available 10am to 4pm,
Monday to Friday)
Email: info@dlf.org.uk
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

The Parkinson's Disease Society produces mugs that are designed to make holding and drinking easier for people with Parkinson's. To find out more about these, please contact Sharward Services (see details on page 18).

Acknowledgements

This book has been produced with the help of Karen Hyland, Specialist Dietitian for Diabetes and Parkinsons Disease, Barnet PCT; Dieticians In Neurological Therapy (DINT), formerly an interest group of The British Dietetic Association; and Nutrition Advisory Group for the Elderly (NAGE), a specialist group of The British Dietetic Association.

How you can help us

We are totally dependent on voluntary donations so if you would like to make a contribution, it would be gratefully received. Any money received will help us support others affected by Parkinson's through information, care and research. To make a donation, please call 020 7932 1303, visit www.parkinsons.org.uk/donate or write to Parkinson's Disease Society, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ. Thank you.





Parkinson's
Disease Society

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PDS Helpline (free) 0808 800 0303 Text Relay 18001 0808 800 0303 (for textphone users only).

(The Helpline is a confidential service. Calls are free from UK landlines and some mobile networks)

Email: pds@parkinsons.org.uk Website www.parkinsons.org.uk

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