

PHYSIOTHERAPY AND PARKINSON'S

**Treatments, therapies
and side effects**

Find out more about
physiotherapy and
how it can help



PARKINSON'S^{UK}
CHANGE ATTITUDES.
FIND A CURE.
JOIN US.

PHYSIOTHERAPY AND PARKINSON'S

People with Parkinson's may find they have problems with everyday movements like walking or getting in and out of a chair or bed. Or they may be curious to know what exercise they can and should be doing.

This information looks at how physiotherapy can help with these issues. It also discusses what advice physiotherapists might give carers.

What is a physiotherapist?

A physiotherapist (often called a physio) is a healthcare professional who helps keep people moving and functioning as much as possible when they have a long-term condition like Parkinson's, or an injury or illness. They're part of your 'multidisciplinary team' – the group of healthcare

professionals who can help you manage your condition.

Where can I find a physiotherapist?

NHS physiotherapists work in lots of different settings, including hospitals and outpatient clinics, as well as community settings, such as care homes, GP surgeries, and people's own homes.

However, there may be a waiting list for their services. There are also a number of physiotherapists based in private clinics and some make home visits.

Clinical guidelines recommend that your GP, specialist or other healthcare professional considers referring you to a physiotherapist with experience of Parkinson's when you're in the early stages of the condition. This is for assessment, education and advice, including about physical activity. The guidelines also say you should be offered physiotherapy if you have balance or movement problems.

They also recommend considering the Alexander Technique. This teaches you how to change your movements to help relieve stress and tension in your muscles. Other techniques, such as Pilates, also do this.

We recommend that you ask your GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse about a referral for physiotherapy as soon as possible after your diagnosis. In some areas, you can refer yourself at the local hospital or a community health centre, depending on the type of service available. If you're referred to an NHS service, there may be a waiting list for appointments.

You can also self-refer to a physiotherapist in private practice, which you will need to pay for. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy can help you find a private physiotherapist. You can find their contact details at the end of this information. Some Parkinson's UK local groups have group sessions led by a physiotherapist – check with your local group for details.

Call our helpline on **0808 800 0303** or see our website **parkinsons.org.uk/localgroups** to find your local group.

What type of physiotherapist should I see?

Any physiotherapist you see should ideally specialise in Parkinson's.

Like many other healthcare professionals, physiotherapists specialise in different areas of practice. Some work specifically with people with neurological conditions like Parkinson's, and some have additional qualifications in exercise and fitness training, especially those working in gym settings.

How can a physiotherapist help me?

Your physiotherapist will assess how Parkinson's affects your movement, whether you're newly diagnosed, or you've had the condition for some time.

This means they can help to keep up your fitness levels, and maintain good posture and balance as your condition progresses. This will help you remain independent.

You may feel that your mobility is very good and that you are exercising without any problems. But a physiotherapist can also help you maintain your mobility to help avoid any future issues.

Your physiotherapist should form part of your support network, involving your family and carers, in helping you manage your Parkinson's.

Seeing a physiotherapist can have a number of benefits for people with Parkinson's and their carers. These are outlined below.

Improving or maintaining fitness

Exercise is good for you and it's particularly good for you if you have Parkinson's.

Being active for 2.5 hours a week can help manage

Parkinson's symptoms and has a positive impact both physically and mentally. The activity you do can suit you and your condition. An intensive group exercise class could help manage mild symptoms or chair-based exercises at home could target complex issues.

A physiotherapist with expertise in Parkinson's can give you advice and support about what will help you. They could give you an exercise programme to follow at home if you prefer to exercise alone. Or, they may give you advice on sports you can do, like golf, or an exercise class you could join, like yoga or tai chi.

They can show you how to stretch and exercise to keep your joints and muscles flexible too. This will help relieve stiffness and slowness, and help you move more smoothly.

As well as helping with your symptoms, exercise can help

with your general health, boosting your circulation and helping prevent heart and lung disease.

Exercise can also help you manage stress and fatigue and boost your mood. It can help you sleep well too. The more you can do, the more benefits you'll get.

Find out more:
see our information about the benefits of exercise and the different types to focus on at parkinsons.org.uk/exercise

Helping you stay independent

People with Parkinson's say certain movements become more difficult as the condition progresses. These include turning in bed, walking, and sitting down and standing up (especially to get into and out of a car). Your physiotherapist can teach you techniques to help make these movements easier.

A physiotherapist or an occupational therapist can also give advice on aids and equipment you could use, or alterations you could make to your home to make it easier and safer to move around.

Always check with a therapist before you buy any piece of equipment or assistive device. Parkinson's affects everyone differently, so what might work for one person may not suit another. Equipment may also help your carer. See our last section for more information.

Find out more:
see our information on daily living equipment for people with Parkinson's.

Helping to prevent or manage falls

Your physiotherapist can work with you on strength and balance training to improve any problems you may have with walking, especially when you're turning.

People who experience freezing, or who are stiffer or weaker, are more at risk of falling. Your physiotherapist can help you improve your confidence and reduce any fear of falling. They can also teach you techniques to help you get down safely on to the floor, and up again if you fall. Often, a physiotherapist will work with an occupational therapist to help you remove any tripping hazards from your home.

Find out more:
see our information about falls and Parkinson's, and freezing in Parkinson's.

Providing pain relief

Parkinson's can cause different types of pain. A physiotherapist can assess your pain to try to find the cause. Your physiotherapist can use different methods to help ease pain in your muscles and bones (musculoskeletal pain), and

from involuntary muscle spasms (dystonic pain). These include manual therapy and stretching, as well as applying heat or cold to the affected area.

Not all pain is related to Parkinson's, and you may have a condition like arthritis, or another injury that needs physiotherapy. So it's important to mention any specific pain apart from your Parkinson's to make sure you get the right support for you.

Many physiotherapists are trained in complementary techniques such as acupuncture, which may also help to reduce pain.

Find out more:
see our information on pain and Parkinson's.

Maintaining or improving effective breathing

Parkinson's can cause stiffness in your chest muscles and make them weaker. This may lead

to chest infections. A physiotherapist can use positioning therapy or other techniques, which focus on your posture, to help clear phlegm and keep your chest clear.

Speech and communication issues in Parkinson's are common and can often relate to your breathing. A physiotherapist can teach you how to strengthen your chest muscles, and provide breathing exercises to improve your breathing pattern and volume. This can also help if your voice has become softer.

If you find that you have specific problems with your voice, a speech and language therapist can help.

Find out more:
see our information on speech and communication issues, and speech and language therapy.

What advice can a physiotherapist give carers?

If you're a carer and help a person with Parkinson's move around, it's important that you get advice from a physiotherapist about caring for your own body, most importantly your back.

A physiotherapist can also give you advice on the best way to help the person you're caring for to move. If the physiotherapist recommends exercises to the person you care for, make sure you understand them. This will mean you can support the person with Parkinson's to get the most out of them.

If it becomes necessary to have equipment in the house to help you with these tasks, a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist can advise you on the most suitable type to use and the best places to put it.

More information and support

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

The society can help you find a physiotherapist privately if you can't see one on the NHS.

020 7306 6666

csp.org.uk

Parkinson's nurses

Parkinson's nurses have specialist experience and knowledge of Parkinson's. They can:

- support people coming to terms with their Parkinson's diagnosis
- help people to manage their medication, so they get the best results and fewer side effects
- make referrals to other professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists

Some nurses are based in the community, such as your GP surgery. Others are based in hospital settings and clinics.

Talk to your GP or specialist for more details on speaking to a Parkinson's nurse.

Parkinson's UK information and support

You can read our most up-to-date information at **parkinsons.org.uk**. You can order printed information by calling **0330 124 3250** or visiting **parkinsons.org.uk/orderingresources**

If you'd like to speak to someone, our specialist adviser team can provide information about any aspect of living with Parkinson's.

They can talk to you about managing symptoms and medication, social care, employment rights, benefits, how you're feeling, and much more.

Call our team on:

0808 800 0303 or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk**

We'll provide expert information over phone or email or put you in touch with an adviser locally.

If you'd like to meet other people living with Parkinson's in your local area, you can find friendship and support through our network of volunteers and local groups. Go to **parkinsons.org.uk/localgroups** or call our helpline to find out more.

Our forum is also a very active space to share and chat with others who really understand, at a time that suits you. Visit **parkinsons.org.uk/forum**

Thank you

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to or reviewed this information.

Thanks also to our information review group and other people affected by Parkinson's who provided feedback.

Feedback

If you have any comments or feedback about our information, please call **0800 138 6593**, email **feedback@parkinsons.org.uk**, or write to us at Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together, please contact us at **healthcontent@parkinsons.org.uk** or visit our website.

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do.

There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's. If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Care team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/donate**

Thank you.

These pages have been left intentionally blank.

We are Parkinson's UK.
Powered by people.
Funded by you.
Improving life for everyone
affected by Parkinson's.
Together we'll find a cure.

PARKINSON'S^{UK}

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**
Monday to Friday 9am–6pm, Saturday 10am–2pm
(interpreting available)
NGT relay **18001 0808 800 0303**
(for textphone users only)
hello@parkinsons.org.uk
parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Last updated: September 2018 | Order Code: INFOB0055

Parkinson's UK is the operating name of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom.
A charity registered in England and Wales (258197) and in Scotland (SC037554). © Parkinson's UK 11/22 (CS3756)