

TIME CRITICAL MEDICATION

Parkinson's factsheet for the
Scottish Ambulance Service

April 2023



WHAT IS PARKINSON'S?

Parkinson's is a complex neurological condition that affects all aspects of daily living. Every person's symptoms are different.

While the majority of people develop Parkinson's symptoms after the age of 65, thousands of working-age people are also affected.

Parkinson's is a progressive, fluctuating condition that affects all aspects of daily living including talking, swallowing and writing. Every person's symptoms are different. People with Parkinson's often find it hard to move freely and may be subject to 'freezing'. People describe this as feeling like their feet are 'glued' to the ground. There may also be other issues including anxiety, depression, dementia, hallucinations, pain and continence problems.

The severity of symptoms can fluctuate from day to day and people can experience rapid changes in functionality over the course of the day.

TIME CRITICAL MEDICATION

People with Parkinson's who do not get their medication can become rapidly unwell. Even a delay of 30 minutes can be harmful.

There is no cure for Parkinson's, but medication is the main way for people to manage their symptoms. Parkinson's medication is time and dose critical, and can have significant side effects. Each person has an individual medication regime. These can be complex.

People who do not get their medication can become rapidly unwell. They may become unable to walk, may struggle to talk, understand questions and some can experience pain and heightened anxiety. Even a delay of 30 minutes can be harmful. Further delays and missed medications can cause serious and long lasting harm for someone living with Parkinson's.

A typical person with Parkinson's takes different types of medication, several times a day. The timing will vary for each individual. Some people are able to manage their own medications when well, but some rely on a carer to help them. If someone with Parkinson's is seriously ill, they are likely to benefit from the support of a carer travelling with them.

HOSPITAL ADMISSION

People with Parkinson's are at high risk of an emergency hospital admission. The most common reasons are after a fall or because of an infection.

In 2020-21, there were 3500 recorded emergency admissions for people with Parkinson's in Scotland. However this is likely to be an underestimate as some people are recorded with their reason for admission without this including that they have Parkinson's.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR PATIENT HAS PARKINSON'S

For people with Parkinson's being treated at home or being transported by ambulance to hospital it is really important to:

- ✓ **Check if medication is due** - Medication can be disrupted when someone is unwell or has had an accident. Always check when the person last took their Parkinson's medication and when the next dose is due. If there has been a missed or delayed dose, encourage the patient to rectify this.
- ✓ **Take a supply of Parkinson's medication** - Preferably in its packaging and if possible with a prescription, to go with the person to hospital.
- ✓ **Seek additional help** - If the person is disorientated or their cognition appears to be affected, seek guidance from any carer or any family member present regarding the person's medication norms and, if possible, enable this helper to accompany the person on the journey to hospital.
- ✓ **Allow time if the person freezes** - Sometimes people can get 'stuck' and not be able to move their feet. They may need some time to get going again. Counting out loud or asking people to try 'marching on the spot' can help them to get moving again.
- ✓ **Prompt further medication as required** - If there are delays in admission to hospital, remind the person to take their medication whenever this is due and provide any help needed, for example, they may need a small amount of fluid.
- ✓ **Ensure adequate handover** - Make sure the receiving hospital admissions staff know about Parkinson's and include information on the Parkinson's medications status in your handover.

For more information about Parkinson's visit
www.parkinsons.org.uk or call 08088000303



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