



The Parkinsonian

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Northwest PADRECC

Parkinson's Disease Research, Education & Clinical Center



Five things you can do today to help prevent falls

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Falls are one of the leading causes of injury in adults over 50 years old. Compound that with a chronic illness such as Parkinson's and the risk for suffering an injurious fall skyrockets. When you suffer an injury your body has to spend valuable resources, healing resources, that are no longer available to keep you active. For someone who has difficulty getting around as easily as they would like, facing the prospect of being less active for weeks or months could very likely mean the end of walking, the end of your independence, or even admittance into a nursing home. Here are five things you might try, starting today, to keep yourself safer.

Exercise: One of the greatest predictors of falls is falls. Once you start falling down you are more likely to fall down again. I believe that the best defense is a good offense so start exercising and being more active now, today, even if you've never fallen in your life. What's more, exercising helps to keep you stronger and healthier and who doesn't need that?

Balance Drills: This ties in closely with the thought above. I tell my patients that even the professional athletes making millions of dollars have to practice little drills – like shooting free-throws. So, why shouldn't you practice little skills like balancing? Stand just next to your bed (bed behind you) and try to lean back without falling. If you can lean and then recover you are learning how to recover from falling backwards! Hold onto the kitchen counter or

walker and do several sideways or backwards single-leg kicks - Do this with music to add some fun.

Tai Chi or Aquatics: Research is showing that Tai Chi or group exercises are not just good for the body but good for the mind too. Group exercise keeps Parkinson's Disease from being quite so isolating and gets you out of the house. I don't know of anyone who has fallen while in the water so aquatics can be a safe exercise option too.

Assistive Devices: Rehabilitation may also offer you an assistive device such as a cane or walker. These can be very effective in helping to improve your ability to walk and more importantly, they can drastically reduce your risk for falling. The tough thing about these devices is that they can't help that much if you do not use them, so leaving the cane in the car won't keep you from falling in the home.

Think about it: If you are sitting in the passenger's seat of a car and you need to get out of the car, which leg goes out first? Answer, not the left one! Slow down, look at your surroundings and take some time to think about your next move. Put the outside leg out first... get both feet out before standing...get your feet (and your walker) under you and get your

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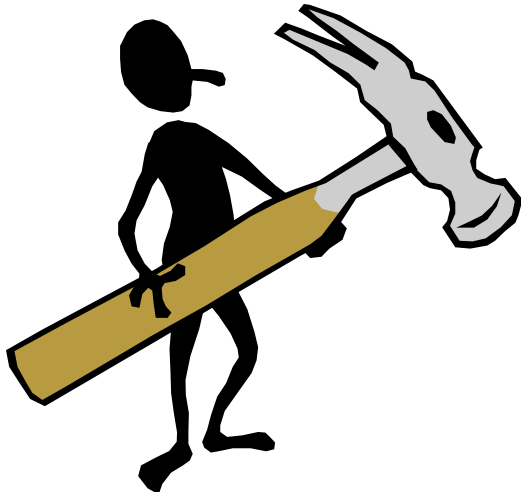


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balance before trying to take steps. If something isn't working don't keep rushing head-long into trouble! Stop...think...start over.

A Nice Quote: "If you don't change the direction you are going, you will end up where you are heading." So, if you want to slow the Parkinson's down you have to head in the opposite direction!

Home Improvement



One way to prevent falls is to make your house a safer place for you to live. Here are some helpful hints on how to achieve a safer living environment.

Remove things that you could tip over:

- Keep your walkways clear
- Remove any extra clutter
- Remove things that you can trip on such as throw rugs, boxes, piles of things, or cords.
- Don't keep items on your stairs
- Clean up any spills right away.
- Keep snow and ice off of entrances and sidewalks

Fix that which is broken:

- Tack rugs and glue vinyl flooring so that it lays flat
- Make sure that carpet is firmly attached to the stairs.
- Repair or discard wobbly step stools.
- Repair loose boards on porches or damaged stairs
- Have rough edges, holes, or large cracks in your sidewalks or driveway repaired.

Light it up:

- Add nightlights to halls, bedrooms, and bathrooms

Patient Poem

This Poem was written by a Parkinson's Disease Patient by the name of Mariko Ikeda. Mariko wrote the poem when commuting by bus and was inspired by watching people get on and off.

It is not sympathy,
Rather "applause" I would send them.
To those who ride the bus with a cane
Or on a wheel chair.
I see the beauty of the strength on every step,
every push they make.
THEY ARE WINNING!!!

- Put light switches at both the bottom and top of stairs as well as on both ends of hallways.
- Make sure that every room has the proper amount of lighting
- Make sure that there are lights near outside doors and stairs
- Keep a lamp or a light switch that you can easily reach without getting out of bed.

Add safety devices:

- Add handrails to both sides of stairs.
- Buy a raised toilet seat
- Add grab bars near the toilet and in the shower
- Use bath mats with suction cups, or use non slip adhesive strips in the shower or tub.
- Get grabbers to help you reach things.
- Buy a bench or stool to sit on in the shower.
- Paint outside stairs with a mixture of sand and paint for better traction.



How to Prepare and What to Do if You Do Fall

There are several things you can do to prepare for a fall. Have someone check on you daily, Keep a list of emergency numbers near the phone, and always have a way to call for help whether it be a cell phone or talk to your doctor about getting a home monitoring service. If you do start to fall, try to relax your body. This will reduce the impact off the fall. Try your best to stay calm. Press your monitor button if you have a home monitoring service or call for help using a cell phone. Make sure that you check with your healthcare provider for any injuries.

Recruiting VA Studies

Memory and Movement Disorders Demonstration Project (VA IRB ID: 1585 VA IRB Grant Number: #02-2202)

Dr. Joseph Quinn, MD is conducting this research study in order to track the frequency and types of changes in mental functioning that occur over time in Parkinson's patients. Participants would be asked to attend one or more study visits. All study visits would take place at the Portland VA Medical Center. The first visit would take less than twenty minutes. If asked to continue in the study there would be a second 90 minute visit and then follow-up examinations once a year for the next 3 years. All patients in the Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinic Center (PADRECC) are invited to participate in this study. You may or may not personally benefit from participating in this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN at (503) 721-1091.

Ability to Arise From the Floor in Persons with Parkinson's Disease (VA IRB ID: 1585 VA IRB Grant Number: #06-1405)

Dr. Jeff Krakkevik, MD is conducting this study to see how well people with Parkinson's Disease can get up from the floor after they experience a fall. Participation would require up to three 30 to 40 minute outpatient visits at the Portland VA Medical center. In order to participate you must be a Veteran treated in the PADRECC Clinic or by the PADRECC physical therapist, Diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, and at least 30 years of age. You may not be able to participate if you are unable to stand or move without the help of a caregiver, you have other neurological or musculoskeletal abnormalities that might affect your ability to stand from a sitting position, or the investigators determine that you are not eligible for safety reasons. You may not benefit from this study, however if you are found to have difficulty in arising from the floor you may benefit from instruction and advice on how to do so. Study visits would take place at the Portland VA Medical center. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN at (503) 721-1091.

Biomarker's in Parkinson's Disease (VA IRB ID: 1774 VA IRB Grant Number: 04-0406)

Dr. Kathryn Chung, MD is conducting a study in order to understand the unique proteins (biomarkers) for Parkinson's Disease (PD) and dementia that are found in the brain. Some of these proteins are also found in the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). CSF is a watery fluid which flows in the cavities within the brain and around the surface of the brain and spinal cord. If we come to understand the kinds and amounts of proteins that exist in the CSF, it may be possible to track the progress of the disease, determine if treatments are helping to slow the disease down, and make more accurate diagnoses of true PD versus conditions that may act like PD. This is a research study and is not treatment for Parkinson's Disease. To participate in this study you must be 21 years of age or older, and have PD. Participants will be asked to participate in 2 study visits which will occur at either the GCRC or the VA Research Clinic area. The first visit, for a screening and physical examination, will last about an hour, and the second visit, for the lumbar puncture, will last about 2 hours. These two visits may be scheduled a couple of days or a couple of weeks apart, depending on scheduling. Participants must be willing to undergo a lumbar puncture (where a special needle will be inserted in between two bones in your lower back). You may not benefit from this study; however you may help us learn how to better help patients in the future. You will also be compensated \$200 for your time and effort. Kathryn Chung, MD is the clinical investigator for the study and can be reached at:

P3-PADRECC
Portland VA Medical Center
3710 SW Veterans Hospital Road
Portland, OR 97239

For more information on how to participate contact David Clark at 503-220-8262 ext. 57538.

Recruiting OHSU Studies

Fish Oil for Depression in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and Parkinson's Disease (PD)

The Parkinson's Center of Oregon at Oregon Health & Science University is looking for people with a confirmed diagnosis of PD who are suffering from Depression. The purpose of the study is to determine if taking omega-3 fatty acids along with your current antidepressant helps with symptoms of depression in people with PD. In addition we will determine if omega-3 fatty acids decrease blood levels of substances that are associated with depression.

You may be eligible to participate in the study if you meet all of the following criteria.

- Have a definite diagnosis of PD
 - On a stable dose of anti-depressant medication
- Between 18-85 years of age

This is a three-month pilot study in which 60 participants with either PD or MS will be randomly assigned to receive either fish oil capsules (which have high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids) or placebo capsules. The study requires 5 visits to OHSU. The research study will pay for all costs associated with the participation in this study. You will be responsible for any expenses that have to do with other aspects of your participation such as childcare and transportation. If you meet the eligibility requirements described above and are interested in participating in this study please call Dr. Lynne Shinto at (503) 494-5035.

Calendar of Events

Upcoming classes, support groups, and other events related to movement disorders

Portland Patient Education Talks

All talks listed will be held in the Portland VA Auditorium from 10:00 – 11:00 unless otherwise noted. Please arrive early for parking
For more information call 503-721-1091

Friday, May 18, 2007: Fatigue in Parkinson's Disease

Gordon Campbell, ANP

Friday, July 27, 2007: Update on Impact and Treatment of Falls in Parkinson's Disease

Jeff Kraakevik, MD and Ron Blehm, BS in PT

Parkinson's Resources of Oregon

Advanced Stage Parkinson's Caregiver Series Mondays May 7, 14, and 21, 2007 from 1-3pm

Location: Hospice of Redmond-Sisters
732 SW 23rd
Redmond, OR 97756.

An education and support program for families caring for a loved one with advanced stage Parkinson's Disease or those Wanting to Learn more.
For more information call 1-800-426-6806

Movement Classes

Weekly class held in a variety of locations providing instruction in the technique created by John Argue (The Art of Moving) for people with Parkinson's. Call: 503-413-7717 Ask for: Holly

Seattle Patient Education Talks

All talks listed will be held at the Seattle VA (Building 1, Room 240) from 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM
For More information call 206-277-4560

Tuesday, June 19, 2007: Medications in PD Ali Samii, MD

Parkinson's Center of Oregon (PCO) 2006-2007 Annual Events:

Newly Diagnosed Educational Session

Occurs every other month
For more information call 503-494-9054

Want to Contribute?

This newsletter is yours, and we think you should be involved. If you have any art, poems, stories, or articles you would like to share with other Parkinson's patients, please send them to the address listed below or e-mail them to nwpadrecc@va.gov with newsletter submission as the subject line.

Portland VA Medical Center

Attention: Susan O'Connor
P3-PADRECC
3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Rd.
Portland, OR 97239

To receive the Parkinsonian by e-mail please forward a request to nwpadrecc@med.va.gov. Call 503-721-1091 to be removed from our mailing list



**Department of
Veteran Affairs**

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