

World Parkinson's Awareness Day: April 11

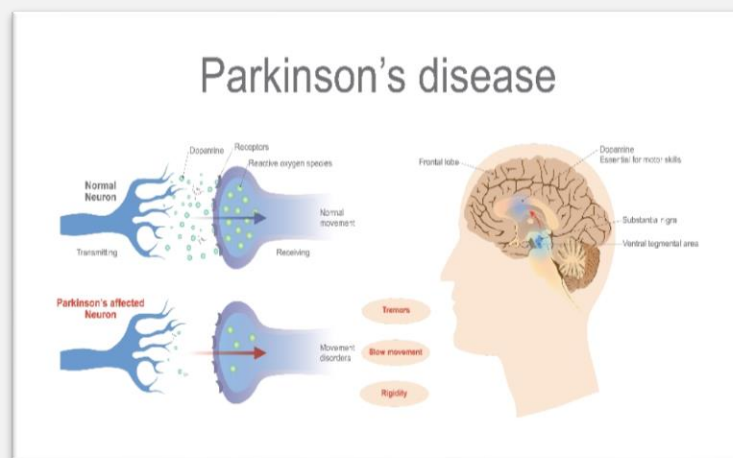
April 11 is World Parkinson's Day. Throughout the month events are taking place all over the world to raise more awareness & funds for research into better treatments & ultimately a cure.

What is Parkinson's?

Parkinson's disease is a progressive, degenerative neurological condition that affects a person's control of their body movements. In Australia, it affects 100,000 people with 32 people being diagnosed every day.

Parkinson's results from the loss of cells in various parts of the brain, including a region called the substantia nigra. When dopamine production is depleted, the motor system nerves are unable to control movement and coordination. The dopamine producing cells are lost over a period of years and the motor type symptoms such as tremor, rigidity etc will start to appear.

This [video](#) from The Michael J. Fox Foundation breaks down the basics of Parkinson's disease.



What causes Parkinson's Disease?

Currently there is no known cause of Parkinson's or understanding of why some people develop Parkinson's and not others.

There are many theories as to the causes of Parkinson's and it is generally thought that multiple factors are responsible. Advancing age, being male and head injuries are potential factors which increase the risk of Parkinson's.



According to Parkinson's Australia, the possible causes of Parkinson's is increasing all of the time. Areas of current research include: ageing, genes, environmental factors, chemical exposure and virus like structures called prions.

Symptoms of Parkinson's

A person living with Parkinson's may only get a few symptoms or could get a range of symptoms. Whilst we cannot cure Parkinson's yet we can manage many of the symptoms so that people can get on with their lives.

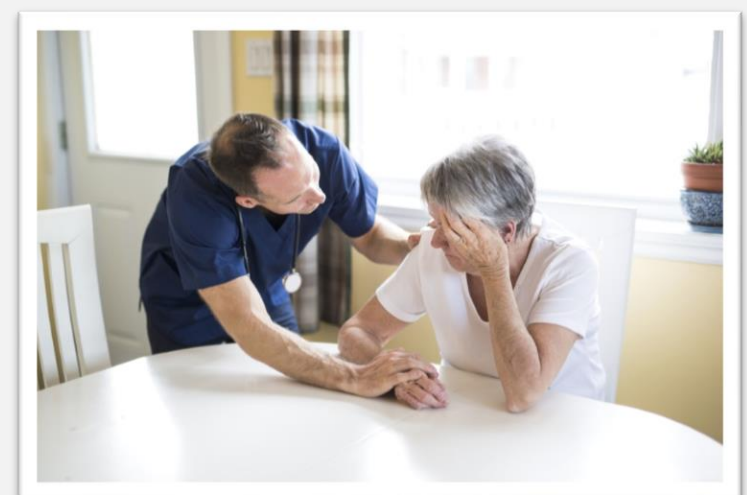
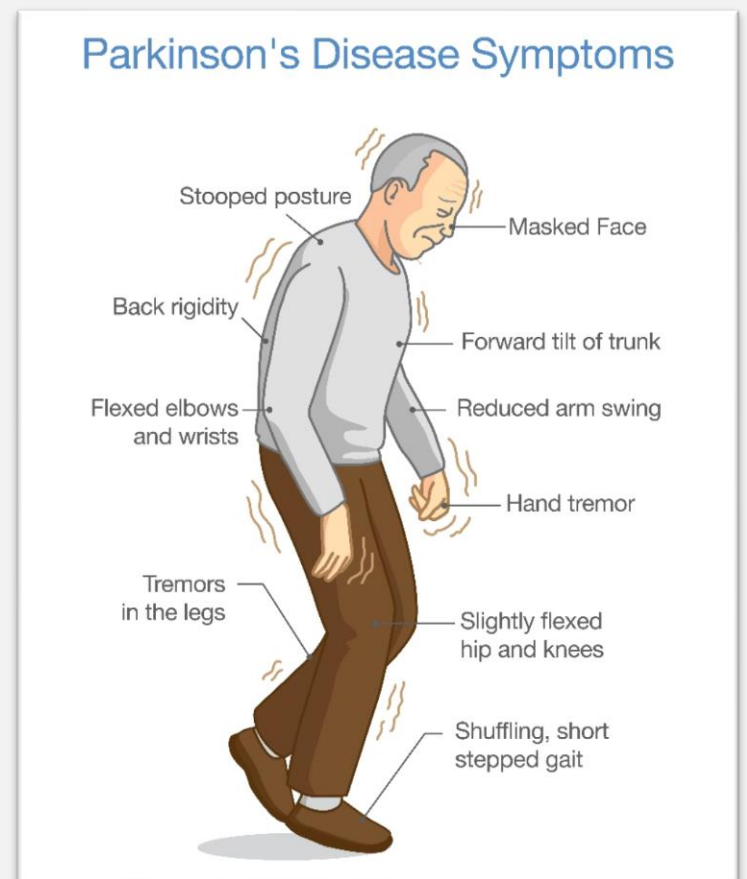
Parkinson's symptoms are broken into two broad categories:

Motor Symptoms

- Tremor (usually occurring at rest – the classic slow, rhythmic tremor of Parkinson's disease typically starts in one hand, foot, or leg and can eventually affect both sides of the body)
- Bradykinesia (slowness of movement)
- Muscle Rigidity (may feel like a cogwheel or ratchet when the limb is moved passively through its range of motion or it may be consistent like bending a lead pipe)
- Postural Instability (falls– usually a late symptom in Parkinson's)

Non-Motor Symptoms

- Sensory dysfunction including loss of the sense of smell and visual disturbances.
- Mood disorders including anxiety, apathy and depression
- Constipation and gastrointestinal issues
- Fatigue, pain and cramping



- Speech problems including changes in verbal fluency similar to stuttering and decreased volume of speech
- Sexual issues including impotence
- Changes in hand writing (it often becomes smaller in height and the written words may be unclear by the end of the sentence).
- Postural hypotension (drop in blood pressure on rising from a lying or sitting position)
- Excessive salivation
- Sleep disorders including REM sleep disorder (where a person acts out their dreams), intense or vivid dreams and excessive daytime sleepiness
- Swallowing difficulties
- Sweating and increased sensitivity to temperatures.
- Cognitive changes – changes in the ability to think and reason, memory difficulties, personality changes and dementia
- Urinary urgency, frequency and incontinence
- Mental health issues including hallucinations and delusions. Impulsive control disorders (binge eating, excessive shopping or gambling) may be an issue and this is usually a side effect of some Parkinson's medications

References: <https://www.parkinsons.org.au>
<https://shakeitup.org.au/understanding-parkinsons/>
<https://shakeitup.org.au/pause4parkinsons/>

