Physical Therapy and Every Day Life with Parkinson’s Disease

Yolanda Shafer PT, MSPT
Useful Assistive Devices

“Better Living through gadgets”
might become your watch words…, but better than
“Pride goeth before the fall.”

Quote from: A Patient-Expert Walks You Through Everything You Need to Learn and Do

The First Year, Parkinson’s Disease, page 146.
Resisting aids Can lead to debilitating falls and broken bones. Devices recommended by Physical or Occupational Therapist’s
Cane
Walker
Ramp
Tub-transfer bench
Grab bars
Select Mobility Activities affected by PD

Walking

- In home or community
- Flat surfaces or uneven surfaces

Transfers

- Lying <> sit <> stand
- Varied heights and surfaces

Bed Mobility

- In/out of bed
- Rolling/ scooting
Walking

Mobility Devices - Help retain mobility and independence
Speed - assist with increasing or decreasing to improve safety
Surfaces - require different devices or techniques
Obstacles - present increased challenges

Consult your doctor for a referral to PT for Device recommendations.
Freezing - All or part of your body is unable to move
Occurs frequently walking through doorways or turning around

Strategies for dealing with Freezing:
Door - imagine a line and step over the line or focus on a point past the doorway
March in place - exaggerating height of marching
Stop and say start out loud
Count your steps
Physical cue (tap on shoulder) or verbal cue from someone
Walker designed for persons with PD
Service dog
Transfers

Lying <-> Sitting
  Bed
  Sofa

Sitting <-> Standing
  Chair - varied heights/firmness
  Floor
  Bed - height/firmness
  Car
Bed/Sofa Mobility

Into Bed:
Back up to the side of the bed using your assistive device
Sit down on the bed
Lye onto one side lifting legs in one swift motion
Roll onto back

Out of Bed:
Roll onto side
Push from side using arms/swinging legs off bed simultaneously
Bed/Sofa Mobility Continued

Rolling:
Bend knee opposite the side you are rolling toward
Place arm opposite the side you are rolling toward out to side
Swing arm and knee across body simultaneously to roll

Scooting:
Bend both knees and place feet on bed
Lift bottom high off the bed
Shift hips to side you intend to scoot
Lift shoulders pressing elbows into bed, scoot shoulders to side
Sit to Stand:
Scoot forward to front edge of chair/bed
Lean forward at hips reaching toward floor with hands
Stand using legs
Touch arm of chair lightly for balance if needed

Stand to Sit:
Back up to chair/bed until you feel it on the back of your legs
Lean and reach forward, both arms/touch arm of chair if needed for safety/balance
Bend hips and knees keeping trunk forward, sit on chair
Car Transfer

Open car door

Turn so your back is facing the seat

Place one hand on the dash and the other on the frame or seat

Lean forward bending hips and knees

Lower bottom to seat

Scoot back on the seat toward the center console

Swing legs into the car turning body to face forward

Reclining the seat back slightly makes in/out of car less difficult
Safety during home projects

Take the time to realistically assess your abilities

Use caution when:

Using sharp knives or power tools - especially with tremors
Climbing ladders or walking on high surfaces without railings
Standing on furniture - ex: changing light bulb/hanging curtains
Stepping over objects left on the floor

Consider projects needed to improve safety now and future
Home Accessibility and Safety

Request a home safety evaluation before an injury occurs

Things to consider:

Stairs/railings/ramp
Levels in the home
Width of doors
Bathroom safety
Avoid clutter and narrow walking paths
Coping Tips
Wear cloths that do not require fasteners
Shoes that slip on, have Velcro closures or curly elastic laces
Use buttonhooks, zipper pulls, long handled shoe horn
Electric toothbrush
Long handled flossing device
Ergonomic utensils
Rubber jar openers/electric can opener
Weighted silverware/kitchen shears instead of knives
Travel mug with a lid
Coping Tips Continued

Bowl filled no more than ½ full/soup spoon

Scooped plate assists with spill prevention

Place items on the tray or seat of your walker to transport

Adapters for doorknobs, drawer pulls, lamp switches and keys

Reacher

Rubber gripper placed on pen or pencil

Carry mailing labels

Telephones and remote controls with large buttons
Safety and Support

Consider the location of your home
Do you have friends or family close by to assist
Is your garage easily accessible
Is it safe for you to walk to your mailbox
Consider a plow service including walkway clearing and salting
Is the lighting good/motion sensor lights or yard lights
Consider moving while you are able to pack and move boxes
Exercise and PD

Research indicates regular exercise and stretching can improve quality of life, potentially slow advancement of symptoms and improve mobility.

Benefits of regular exercise and stretching:
- Improve flexibility
- Improve energy
- Improve posture
- A social activity
- Can be a natural anti-depressant
Exercise Tips

Always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

Pace yourself
Start slowly and build up your activity level and tolerance.

Exercise should not be painful

Avoid exercising during an “off time”, it can be dangerous

Stretch first thing in the morning

Stretch before and after exercise
Exercise Tips Continued

Exercise in an open space

Aerobic exercise recommended

- Increased heart rate and breathing
- Sustained—generally at least 20 minutes

Strengthens your heart

Make exercise a priority—schedule it into your daily routine

Find an exercise you enjoy

Don’t exercise immediately after eating or right before bed

Don’t exercise in remote areas away from help
Traveling Considerations with PD

Be aware of driving risks:

- Slowed reactions
- Limitations in neck or trunk motion
- Difficulty judging distance
- Rigidity
- Dyskinesia

Consider carrying a Medical Alert card that can be obtained from the National Parkinson’s Foundation.

Talk to your doctor about a handicapped tag or plate.

Have your driving evaluated—don’t risk hurting yourself or others.
Travel Considerations Continued

Carry a list of meds with dosages
Contact information for your physicians
All of your medication, plus at least one full day’s extra
Health insurance information
Comfortable walking shoes
Water bottle
Medication timer
Telescoping cane or walking stick
Medic-Alert bracelet- information must be kept current
Hotels- ask for handicapped-accessible room

When driving:
Make frequent stops to stretch
Large plastic bag in the glove box- assists with sliding on seats
Keep a couple extra doses of medication in your car
When renting choose a vehicle that is easy to get in/out

Air Travel:
Ask for Handicapped-accessible seating
Arrive early- board early
Gate check your walker
Use available airport transportation- pre-arrange
Job Accommodation Considerations

Need for accommodations will vary from person to person

Ergonomic workstation

Arm support

Writing and grip aids

Page turner and book holder

Close parking

Accessible entrance

Automatic door openers

Move workstation to a central location/close to restroom
Questions/Comments