



CommCare Corporation

Addressing Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's Disease and the Elderly . . .

Parkinson's disease is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement. It is considerably more prevalent in the over-60 age group, developing gradually, often starting with a barely noticeable tremor in one hand. The disorder also commonly causes a slowing or freezing of movement.

Some may notice a decline or absence of facial expression or that the arms no longer swing with the walk. Speech often becomes soft and mumbling. And symptoms tend to worsen as the disease progresses.

While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease, nursing, therapy and social service interventions as well as many different types of medicines can treat its symptoms.

Symptoms:

- **Tremor.** The shaking associated with Parkinson's disease often begins in a hand. Rubbing the thumb and forefinger together is common, and may occur when the hand is at rest.
- **Slowed motion.** Over time, Parkinson's may reduce the ability to initiate voluntary movement, making simple tasks difficult and time-consuming. Steps may become short and shuffling or feet may freeze to the floor, making it hard to take the first step.
- **Rigid muscles.** Muscle stiffness can occur and at times be so severe that it limits the range of movements and causes pain.
- **Impaired posture & balance.** Posture may become stooped and balance problems may occur in the later stages of the disease.
- **Loss of automatic movements.** Blinking, smiling and swinging the arms when walking are normal, unconscious acts. In Parkinson's disease, these acts tend to be diminished or lost.
- **Speech changes.** With Parkinson's disease speech may become softer, more rapid or more monotone, with individuals sometimes slurring or repeating words or hesitating before speaking.
- **Dementia.** In the later stages of Parkinson's disease, some people develop problems with memory and mental clarity.

A Holistic Approach to Parkinson's Disease

- **Medication Management**
- **Balanced Diet & Increased Nutritional Support**
- **Physical Therapy to Help Maintain Strength & Agility, Balance & Gait**
- **Speech Therapy to Address Speaking & Swallowing Issues**
- **Occupational Therapy to Develop Strategies and Skills for Activities of Daily Living, Such as Dressing.**
- **Social Services to address Depression**
- **Patient Education**