



Understanding Parkinson's Disease

More than 10 million people worldwide are estimated to be living with Parkinson's.

1. Introduction

Parkinson's disease is a progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects movement and gradually worsens over time. It occurs when nerve cells in the brain become damaged or die, leading to symptoms like tremors and stiffness. Early signs can be subtle, such as a faint tremor in one hand, reduced facial expression, or softer speech, but these symptoms tend to become more noticeable and disruptive as the condition progresses. While there isn't a cure yet, treatments and therapies can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life for many people living with Parkinson's.

2. Causes

The exact cause of Parkinson's disease isn't fully understood, but experts believe it's likely due to a mix of genetic and environmental factors. Symptoms begin as nerve cells in the brain weaken and break down. Decreased dopamine levels lead to movement problems and other symptoms. Additional brain chemicals may also be affected, which can lead to symptoms beyond movement, such as fatigue or blood pressure changes.

3. Symptoms

Parkinson's disease symptoms include:

- + Tremors, often starting in one hand or fingers
- + Slowed movements
- + Muscle stiffness
- + Balance and posture issues
- + Changes in speech and facial expressions
- + Non-movement symptoms including fatigue, depression, anxiety and sleep problems

4. Treatment

There's currently no cure for Parkinson's disease, but treatment can help manage symptoms and maintain quality of life. The first step is understanding the condition and how it progresses, as many people with Parkinson's are able to live well with the right care. Most treatment plans include medications that boost or replace dopamine to improve movement and reduce symptoms. Over time, doctors may also recommend exercise, physical or speech therapy, and in some cases procedures like deep brain stimulation to help keep symptoms under control.

Did you know?

Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's disease.

For more information on Parkinson's disease, please visit [parkinson.org/](https://www.parkinson.org/).

References:

<https://www.parkinson.org/understanding-parkinsons>

<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/parkinsons-disease>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/parkinsons-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20376055>