

Patient information

Parkinson's and Speech and Language Therapy

What is Parkinson's caused by?

- A loss of nerve cells in the brain that produce a chemical called dopamine
- Dopamine acts as a messenger between parts of the brain and the nervous system that facilitates the planning and controlling of automatic muscle movements
- Therefore, a reduction in dopamine will affect automatic movements such as walking, talking, writing, eating and drinking.

What are the main symptoms of Parkinson's?

There are four main symptoms of Parkinson's:

- Resting tremor
- Slowness of movement
- Impaired balance
- Rigidity (stiffness)

There are also a wide range of other symptoms.

Parkinson's is characterised by smaller movements, this is **not** due to muscles becoming weaker because of Parkinson's but muscles do become weaker over time because they are not used to their full capacity.

What are the symptoms that I am experiencing that led to a Speech and Language Therapy referral?

Talking

- Someone with Parkinson's may have difficulty regulating the volume of their speech, for example, they feel they are speaking loud enough for the environment they are in, but they are actually speaking quietly and may not be heard or understood.
- We automatically take enough breath for the words we are about to speak. With Parkinson's, people can run out of breath before they finish their sentence.
- Someone with Parkinson's may have less intonation in their speech and therefore sound more monotone and/or their voice may sound 'hoarse'.

Swallowing

- The muscles we use for speech are also the muscles we use for swallowing.
- We automatically swallow our saliva throughout the day but someone with Parkinson's may not be swallowing it as frequently and therefore may get a build-up of secretions in their mouth which may also lead to drooling.
- Increased difficulty swallowing e.g. coughing while eating or drinking,
- Other symptoms may include a wet vocal quality after eating or drinking, feeling like food or pills gets stuck and unexplained weight loss.

How can these be managed?

Humans have two motor systems

1. Automatic motor system
2. Intentional motor system

The intentional motor system can bypass some of the other structures in the brain that the automatic system refers to and is therefore, not as reliant on dopamine. This means someone with Parkinson's can achieve a task that is usually performed by the automatic motor system, by using intent.

For someone with Parkinson's, it is important to practice speaking **with intent** and using their voice eg speaking and singing **frequently** to maintain the strength of their muscles.

What are the challenges?

- **There is a sensory deficit associated with Parkinson's.** Movements do not feel the way they are actually working to the individual. For example, they think they are speaking loud enough and might suggest that it maybe the hearing of the other individual that is the concern.
- **Dopamine impacts motivation.** Someone with Parkinson's may have every intention to do regular exercises but reduced motivation can make it difficult. Things like setting a daily exercise routine, exercise with a family member/friend or a group, attend a regular group which enables speaking or singing, can help. For a loved one/carer it may be helpful to say, "It's time to do your exercises/practice now", rather than "Do you want to do your exercises?".

What are the expected benefits?

To maintain your optimum voice your Speech and Language Therapist recommends you speak with **intent** everyday. Ask family and/or friends to support you. Share this information with your family and friends so they can understand the support they can offer.

Other resources you may find helpful

- Parkinson's UK website <http://www.parkinsons.org.uk>
- **'SINGAPP: PARKINSON'S'** is available for both Apple and Android smart phones and tablet has been developed by Nicola Wydenbach, a leading practitioner in the field of Parkinson's singing therapy in the UK. The new app is available to download from [Google Play](#) or the [Apple Store](#) and costs £7.99.
SingApp: Parkinson's gives patients access to over 40 three-minute exercises and three workouts that are designed to be done whilst they may be boiling the kettle or putting on their shoes.

Examples of groups available:

- Parkinson's singing groups – For Eastbourne, Seaford and Hailsham: Contact Veronika Lees, 01323 654468, veronika.lees@hotmail.co.uk For Bexhill, Hastings & Rother: Contact Jane Metcalfe, 07760366367, info@parkinsonsongsters.co.uk

- Parkinson's UK support group – For Eastbourne, Seaford and Hailsham: Contact Michael Pennell, 01323 351948, Michealpennell01@gmail.com. For Bexhill, Hastings and Rother: Contact Chris Griffith, 01424 848690, chris.griffith5@btinternet.com
- Dance for Parkinson's – Contact Claire Tabraham, 07957 408694, eastbournedancespace@hotmail.com
- Parkinson's café – Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne. First Wednesday of the month 4-6pm. *A Café for people with Parkinson's as well as partners, family and friends in an informal setting for conversation, laughter, friendship and mutual support.*

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Other formats

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After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
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The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet:
CHIC and Older People IPR

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