

## The Parkinsonism Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Parkinsons New Zealand is a voluntary, non profit organisation that offers support, education and information to people living with Parkinsonism conditions, their families and health professionals.  
Parkinson's NZ has divisions and support groups nationwide.

### We can offer

- ▶ Further information on Parkinson's and Parkinsonism conditions
- ▶ Regular up-to-date information through our national magazine
- ▶ Responsible reporting of recent research
- ▶ Books and audio-visual material
- ▶ Local meetings and education programmes
- ▶ Advice on health and welfare assistance available
- ▶ Support from a professional Field Officer in your area.

Parkinsons New Zealand is reliant on funding from grants, bequests and donations.  
Your support is welcome!

### Divisions/support groups provide:

- ▶ Fellowship
- ▶ Information
- ▶ Support
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Activities.

### Contact

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Donation line: 0900 36 773

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**[www.parkinsons.org.nz](http://www.parkinsons.org.nz)**

*Your local contact:*

# An introduction to Parkinson's

**Some answers to your questions about PD**



**Your Society provides:**

▶ **Field Officer Service**

▶ **Education**

▶ **Support**

Parkinsons New Zealand wish to thank J. R. McKenzie Trust for their support in producing this pamphlet.

# Parkinson's Disease (PD)

## What is Parkinson's disease?

Parkinson's is a slowly progressive condition which occurs when insufficient quantities of the chemical dopamine are produced by the brain. This results in changes in movement, balance and co-ordination. Diagnosis by a specialist is necessary.

## What causes it?

This is not yet known, but there is much research being undertaken worldwide. Great progress in understanding Parkinson's has been made in recent years.

## Symptoms of Parkinson's

Because Parkinson's can affect all muscles, a variety of symptoms may develop.

The main symptoms of Parkinson's are:

- ▶ Tremor
- ▶ Stiffness and rigidity
- ▶ Slowness of movement (bradykinesia).

*Other symptoms may be experienced:*

- ▶ Tiredness
- ▶ Numbness, tingling, weakness
- ▶ Difficulty in initiating movement
- ▶ Postural change
- ▶ Difficulty with writing

- ▶ Altered speech

- ▶ Loss of facial expressions.

## Who gets Parkinson's

1 person in every 500. Both men and women from all walks of life. It is more common in later years.

## What is the treatment?

Drugs are the main form of treatment. Whilst they do not cure the disease, they reduce the symptoms. The most commonly used drugs replace the dopamine which is produced in inadequate quantities.

**Activity and self help** measures are very important but avoid becoming over-tired.

## Everybody is affected differently

An individualised treatment programme is necessary so an independent lifestyle can be maintained.

## What is the prognosis?

Parkinson's is a progressive disorder, the rate of progression differs in every person.

## Parkinson's facts

Parkinson's disease is not:

- ▶ Contagious
- ▶ Thought to be hereditary
- ▶ Curable (at present)
- ▶ An acute illness
- ▶ Life threatening
- ▶ An intellectual impairment.

## To the person with Parkinson's and their family

Parkinson's will concern the whole family.

You will need to learn as much as you can about Parkinson's, so you can understand what is happening and play an active part in the management of the condition. This will assist in the maintenance of a satisfying lifestyle.

Communication and support is vital.

It is important to be aware that the person with Parkinson's may have less energy than previously. Energy levels may fluctuate but doing less does not indicate laziness!