

Parkinson Disease: Tips for Taking Medicines



Parkinson symptoms are much easier to manage with a good medicine routine. In particular, the timing of when medicines are taken can affect what activities are possible later on. You should also be aware that, as the disease progresses, your medicines may not work as well or as long as they did before. Your healthcare provider may prescribe different medicines. Or, you may need to take the same medicines more often.

Timing is important

Parkinson medicines can be a big help in reducing symptoms. But they may work well for only a certain amount of time before symptoms return. For best results, take medicines at the same time each day. It can also help to keep a medicine diary. Write down how long it takes for them to work, how long it takes before symptoms return, and any side effects you may have. If you have a smartphone, there are apps that can help keep track of your symptoms. This makes it easier to plan activities for times you'll feel your best. It also helps your healthcare provider adjust your medicine when you're having problems.



Staying on track

Below are tips for taking medicines. If you have questions about your medicines, talk with your healthcare provider or pharmacist:

- Put an alert on your smartphone or computer to remind you to take your medicine.
- Use a pillbox or divided tray to keep track of medicines.
- Take **all** your medicines as prescribed. Don't take one type and skip another.
- Don't take levodopa at the same time you eat a high-protein meal or take iron supplements. These can affect how your medicine works. Ask your healthcare provider what times are best to take your medicines.

- Talk with your healthcare provider if you notice your medicines aren't working as well. Do this as soon as you notice your symptoms changing.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your medicines and any over-the-counter medicines or supplements you use. Bring it to healthcare provider appointments.
- Plan ahead. Refill prescriptions before they run out.
- Plan ahead when traveling. Keep all your medicines with you in your carry-on bag. Pack some extras in case you are delayed or your supply is lost. Continue taking medicines as prescribed if changing time zones, with the same intervals between doses.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have problems swallowing pills.
- Never change your dosage or stop taking medicine without talking to your healthcare provider. Stopping medicines suddenly can lead to serious side effects.
- Never share your medicines or use another person's medicines.
- Ask your healthcare provider about an emergency supply of your medicines for a 72-hour emergency preparedness kit.

Coping with side effects

You may have some side effects when you start taking medicines. This does not mean you should stop taking them. Instead, talk with your healthcare provider. Tell them about any side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, lightheadedness, loss of appetite, or sleep problems. Also tell your healthcare provider if any medicine causes confusion, hallucinations, or involuntary movements. Some people have an unusual desire to gamble or engage in other obsessive behaviors. Your healthcare provider may adjust the amount of medicine you take. Or, you may be given another type.

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