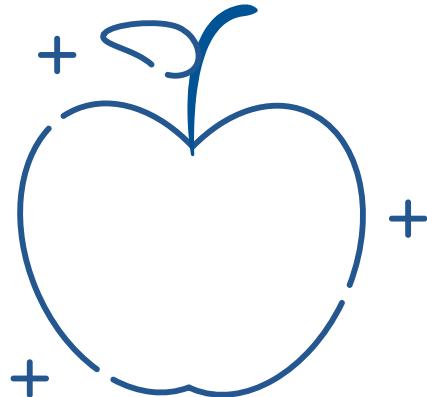


# PARKINSON'S DISEASE

## NUTRITION 101

Parkinson's disease is a neurological disorder that affects movement. It can impact the digestive system, muscle function, and overall well-being. Proper nutrition is important in managing symptoms, maintaining energy, and improving overall well-being.



### GENERAL NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS:

While a single “best” diet for people living with Parkinson’s has yet to be established, the Mediterranean diet is associated with a decreased risk for various disease, including Parkinson’s disease. This diet is full of nutrients that support gut health and brain function.

#### The Mediterranean Diet

- Focus on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, olive oil, herbs, and spices.
- Consume fish or seafood at least three times per week.
- Consume moderate amounts of poultry, eggs, and dairy products.
- Limit red and processed meats and concentrated sweets (cakes, cookies, donuts, sodas, etc.).
- Limit unhealthy fats, such as those found in butter, fried foods, and full-fat dairy products.
- Drink plenty of water. Most people should aim for 8 cups per day.

# **COMMON NUTRITION-RELATED CONCERNS:**

## **Trouble Swallowing**

More than 80% of patients living with Parkinson's disease develop trouble swallowing, also known as "dysphagia." Swallowing difficulty can increase your risk for choking, which can lead to pneumonia. It is important to work with a speech-language pathologist (SLP) to assess your swallow function. A registered dietitian-nutritionist (RDN) can help make modifications to your diet to make chewing and swallowing easier.

## **Weight Loss**

Weight changes can occur as a result of various factors, including changes in daily energy needs, mobility, appetite, and eating habits. Weight loss has been associated with disease progression. If you notice weight loss, your healthcare team can help you understand why you might be losing weight and how to prevent further weight loss.

## **Constipation**

Many people living with Parkinson's report gastrointestinal problems, such as constipation. A diet rich in fiber can help manage constipation. Hydration and movement can also support bowel regularity.

## **Medication-Diet Interaction**

The medication "carbidopa-levodopa" helps manage symptoms in people with Parkinson's disease. Some people experience an interaction between their medication and dietary protein, leading to symptom fluctuations. In general, you should take carbidopa-levodopa about 30 minutes before a meal to avoid interactions. If you experience symptom fluctuations and suspect an interaction with protein in your diet, a registered dietitian-nutritionist (RDN) can help you balance your protein intake to support better medication absorption.

# PRACTICAL NUTRITION TIPS:

## Meal Planning & Shopping:

- Plan meals around similar ingredients. This can help you save time at the grocery store, save money, and prevent food waste.
- Save money by purchasing foods (e.g., grains, nuts, seeds) in bulk.
- Make larger batches of food to save time later in the week.
- Freeze leftovers in containers for future use.
- When possible, cook meals at home and minimize eating out. When eating out, you have less control over the amount of fats, salts, and sugars that are added to your meal.
- Read nutrition labels. Choose foods with <5% Daily Value (DV) for added sugars.
- Fill 1/2 of your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables, focusing on different colors and different types.

## Cooking:

- Remove all visible fat from meats before cooking.
- Avoid frying foods. Instead, use cooking methods such as baking, broiling, roasting, stewing, or stir-frying.
- Use olive oil for braising and to add flavor.
- Save time on preparation by buying fruits and vegetables already cut. Frozen produce can be just as nutritious as fresh and is often more cost effective.
- Reduce added salt. Instead, try new flavors using different herbs and spices.
- If making a stir-fry, include fiber-rich and nutrient-dense vegetables (e.g., peppers, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, and kale).
- Add legumes, such as beans or lentils, to soups.
- Replace refined cereals in recipes with whole grains.