

Fueling the Fight: Nutrition Strategies to Support Parkinson's Symptoms and Enhance Well-Being

Jessica Schroeder, RDN, LD
Founder/CEO Expedition Wellness, LLC



WELCOME!



WHO WE ARE...

- Des Moines Based Nutrition Consulting Business
- Female-Owned
- Who can we help?! EVERYONE
- Personalized Meal Plans
- Accountability Partnership
- Lifestyle Coaching
- Macro-friendly Individualized meals
- 1:1 Personal Training



Objectives of this Presentation

- Understand the role of nutrition in managing Parkinson's symptoms
- Identify key nutrients that support brain, gut, and muscle health
- Learn practical food and meal strategies for daily living
- Empower caregivers and individuals with real food solutions



What's on your plate?



Understanding the role of Nutrition in Managing PD symptoms



While there is no singular "Parkinson's diet," proper nutrition plays a vital role in managing symptoms, enhancing medication effectiveness, and supporting overall health.

[Michael J. Fox Foundation](#)



Why Nutrition Matters for Parkinson's Disease

Consumptions of a **western diet** (high intake of calories, saturated fats, refined sugars, and salt, and low intake of unsaturated fats and fiber) plays a role in the risk of developing neurodegenerative diseases.

Consumption of a **mediterranean diet** (or components of a mediterranean diet) may protect against and help combat symptoms of neurodegenerative diseases.



Why Nutrition Matters for Parkinson's Disease

PD patients have been found to consume a lower quality diet than household and community controls.

A lower quality diet is characterized by **higher intakes** of carbohydrates, total and added sugars, and trans fats and **lower intakes** of fiber, folate, unsaturated fatty acids, protein, and fat.



Protein-Levodopa Connection



- Dietary amino acids can compete with Levodopa for absorption in the GI tract, possibly decreasing the effectiveness of the medication.
- This only appears to happen in a small subset of individuals.
- **The answer is not to decrease protein intake!**

If protein is interfering with medication effectiveness:

- Move main intake of protein to the end of the day
- Try to spread out protein consumption evenly throughout the day
- Protein-rich foods should be consumed 1-2 hours after dose

The Mediterranean Diet + Mind Diet

Fiber-rich
Whole Grains

Fruits and
vegetables

Nuts and
olive oil

Improves gut microbiota diversity, can improve insulin resistance, prevents the use of protein as an energy source.

Rich in fiber and antioxidants - scavenge free radicals and prevent inflammation.

Rich in omega-3's, a neuroprotective essential fatty acid.

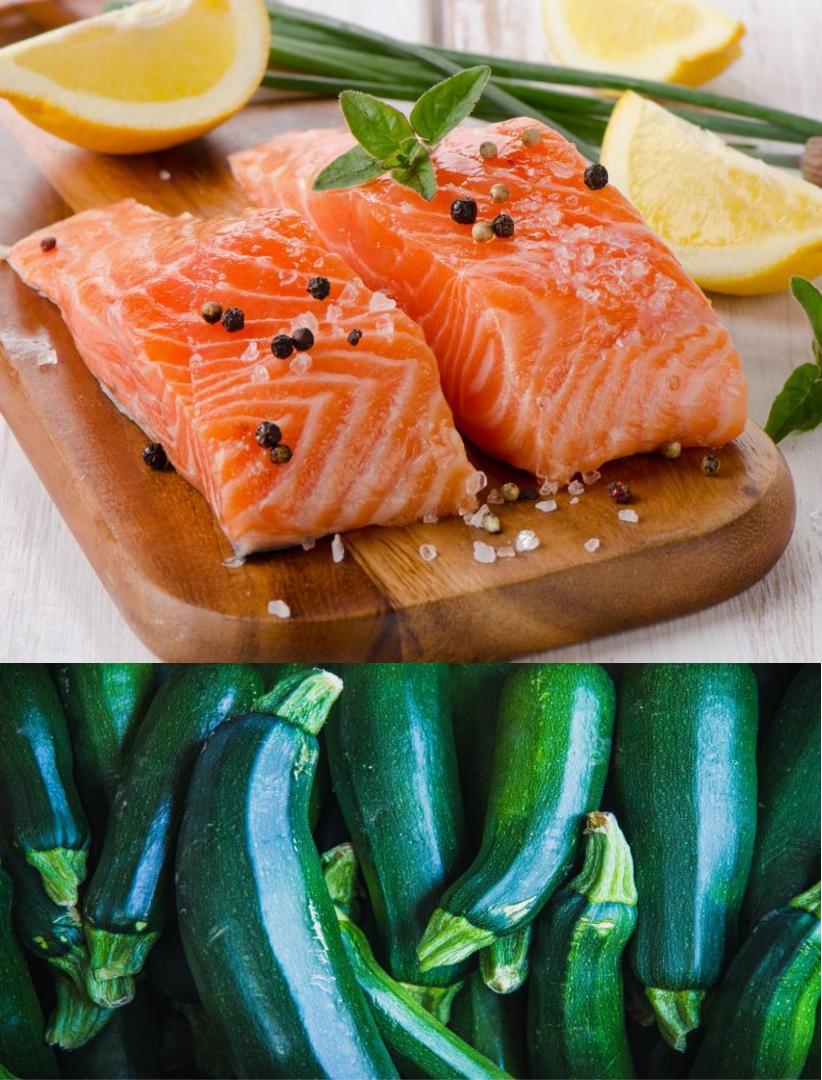
Minimal red meat, fish and poultry as lean protein sources, cheese and yogurt in moderation

PD Symptoms + Nutrition interventions



Common Symptoms in PD

1. Tremors
2. Dysphagia/Difficulty swallowing
3. Constipation
4. Loss of appetite/Nausea
5. Orthostatic Hypotension
6. Bradykinesia
7. Muscle Rigidity



Nutrition Therapy for Tremors



- Magnesium-Rich Foods: Magnesium helps relax muscles.
Foods include; Spinach, Almonds, Edamame, Peanut Butter, Whole Grains, Fruit

Example meal/snack: PB Toast + Banana

- **WATER!!!**
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids
 - Salmon, Flax seeds, Edamame

Nutrition Therapy for Difficulty swallowing



Add liquids/sauces to foods
Drink enough **WATER!!**

Ground meats/steamed vegetables

Modify consistency of foods for safe
swallowing

Consume high energy and nutrient-dense
oral nutrition supplements if swallowing
difficulty is significantly decreasing total
intake. Ex-Ensure, Fairlife, etc

Meal Idea

Breakfast or snack:

Chocolate Cherry Spinach Smoothie

- 1 scoop chocolate protein powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup skim milk
- 1 cup frozen cherries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh spinach
- $\frac{1}{4}$ avocado
- 1 tbsp chia seeds



Nutrition Therapy for Constipation



Drink >64 oz. Water

Add High Fiber Foods >25g total/day

Fiber sources: cereals, nuts and seeds, whole grain breads, raw and cooked vegetables, and fruits.

Magnesium citrate

Bulking agents such as psyllium and bran can be helpful.

Meal Idea

Lunch or dinner: Black bean, chicken and Rice Bowl



Nutrition Therapy for loss of appetite/ nausea



Loss of appetite:

- Shakes/Smoothies
- Add protein powder into oatmeal and yogurt and smoothies
- Add olive oil when cooking to increase calories
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals

Nausea:

- Bland foods such as rice, potatoes, bread, banana, applesauce, pretzels
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Avoid foods with strong odors and fried foods

Nutrition Therapy for Orthostatic Hypotension



1. Hydration is Key

- Cold water can be especially effective for a rapid BP boost.

2. Increase Salt Intake (with doctor's guidance)

- Sodium helps retain fluid and increase blood pressure.
- Options: salted broth, pretzels, olives, lightly salted nuts (if safe to chew/swallow).

3. Small, Frequent Meals

- Opt for **4–6 smaller meals** per day with balanced macronutrients.

4. Avoid Alcohol

Meal Idea

Lunch: Turkey and cheese roll-ups



Nutrition Therapy for Bradykinesia



High Protein meal- Protein is essential for muscle function.

- Lean Meats
- Tofu
- Legumes
- Dairy

Vitamin D-lack of Vitamin D can exacerbate motor difficulties

- Fortified Milk
- Eggs
- Sunlight

Complex Carbohydrates- provide sustained energy.

- Whole grains (brown rice, oats, quinoa)

Nutrition Therapy
for Muscle Rigidity



Anti-inflammatory foods-

- Berries
- Leafy Greens
- Nuts/Seeds

Hydration

Potassium-Rich Foods-

- Bananas
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes

Key Nutrients for Brain, Gut and Muscle Health



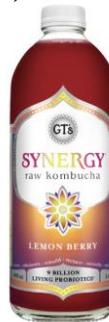
Brain Health-The role of inflammation and oxidative stress in PD

- **Drink Tea**-Black and green tea exert neuroprotective effects due to their high concentration of polyphenols (antioxidants).
- **Eat more Fruits & Vegetables**- Phytochemicals present in fruits and vegetables may slow the progression of PD - vitamins A, B (riboflavin), C, and E.
- **Healthy Fats**- Unsaturated fatty acids have anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties - fish, nuts, seeds, avocado.



Gut Health- The role of probiotics in PD

- **Parkinson's is an inflammatory brain condition.** There is a strong connection between gut health and brain health, often called the **gut-brain axis**. Consuming probiotics can increase the number and diversity of the good bacteria. These good bacteria can produce **anti-inflammatory compounds**, which may help **reduce inflammation** in the brain and slow the progression of PD.
- Probiotics are beneficial bacteria found in fermented foods (like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut) or supplements.



Have you caught on?....More WATER

Aim to drink 8-10 cups of water per day.

Water = oxygen = Brain function, Muscle performance, Immune health, healing & recovery

Tips to increase water intake:

- Create a routine
- Find a vessel that works for YOU!
- Sip on water consistently throughout the day
- Have one glass at each medication administration
- Add flavoring such as lemon or tea bags
- Utilize electrolyte tabs or packets
- Set a reminder to drink water each hour



Summary of Ways to Support the Whole Body through Nutrition

- Eat more Fruits & Vegetables
- Eat more fiber-rich whole grains
 - >25 grams fiber/day
- Don't skip Protein
- Eat more probiotic foods
- Stay hydrated
- Eat more Vitamin D rich foods
 - Egg Yolk
 - Salmon, Tuna
 - Fortified foods such as cereal
 - Dairy products
 - SUNSHINE!!!



Putting it all Together



How to get started?

- Plan ahead
- Be open to trying new foods
- Buy a mixture of vegetables & fruits (frozen, fresh, pre-chopped, etc)
- Stock up the freezer (i.e. frozen salmon)
- Create a routine
- Have a cold glass of water ready to go when you wake up
- Ask for help!

Sample Day



5:30AM	Wake up -Water-8oz
6:30AM	Med Dose #1-Water-8oz
8:00AM	Pre-workout/Breakfast = 2 servings of carbohydrates +2- 3oz protein + 8oz. water
10:30AM	Med Dose #2-Water-8oz
12:00PM	Lunch-4oz. Protein + 2 cups vegetables + 2 servings of carbs Water-16oz
2:30PM	Med Dose #3-Water-8oz + 1 Carb
4:00PM	Snack 1 carb + 4oz protein Water- 8oz.-16oz.
5:00PM	Dinner-3oz protein + 2 cups veggies + 1-2 servings carb Water-8oz.
6:30PM	Med Dose #4-Water-8oz
9:30PM	Bed
10:00PM	Med Dose #5-Water-8oz

Breakfast Idea

Protein-Packed Oatmeal Bowl

Ingredients:

- **½ cup old-fashioned oats** (1 serving whole grains)
- **1 cup milk** (dairy, ~8g protein)
- **1 scoop unflavored or vanilla protein powder** (~15-20g protein)
- **1 tbsp ground flax/Chia/Hemp seeds** (healthy fat + fiber)
- **1 tbsp nut butter** (healthy fat, extra protein)
- **¼ cup berries or banana slices** (optional for flavor & antioxidants)



Lunch Idea



Chicken & Veggie Wrap with Yogurt and Fruit

Ingredients:

- **1 whole wheat tortilla** (1 serving whole grains)
- **3 oz grilled or rotisserie chicken** ($\approx 26\text{g}$ protein)
- **1 cup mixed veggies** (spinach, bell peppers, cucumbers, or any preferred)
- **1 tbsp hummus or mashed avocado** (healthy fat)
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain Greek yogurt** (dairy, extra protein)
- **1 small apple or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup berries** (fruit)



Dinner Idea

Salmon, Roasted Veggies & Brown Rice

Ingredients:

- **3-4 oz baked salmon** ($\approx 22\text{-}25\text{g}$ protein, brain-healthy omega-3s)
- **1 cup roasted broccoli & carrots** (vegetables, fiber, antioxidants)
- **$\frac{1}{2}\text{-}1$ cup cooked brown rice** (whole grain, energy-boosting)
- **1 small orange or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grapes** (fruit, vitamin C)



How Can Caregivers Help?

1. Understand Individual needs
2. Help Plan ahead
3. Help create routine
4. Make eating easier
5. Support Hydration
6. Promote safe swallowing
7. Prevent Constipation
8. Help track symptoms & preferences
9. Emotional support



Contact us today!

www.expeditionwellnesscoach.com



References

- Knight, E., Geetha, T., Burnett, D., & Babu, J. R. (2022). The Role of Diet and Dietary Patterns in Parkinson's Disease. *Nutrients*, 14(21), 4472. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14214472>
- Seidl, S. E., Santiago, J. A., Bilyk, H., & Potashkin, J. A. (2014). The emerging role of nutrition in Parkinson's disease. *Frontiers in aging neuroscience*, 6, 36. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2014.00036>
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Nutrition Care Manual®. Parkinson's Disease. Accessed February 14, 2025.
- Jackson, A., Forsyth, C. B., Shaikh, M., Voigt, R. M., Engen, P. A., Ramirez, V., & Keshavarzian, A. (2019, November 8). *Diet in parkinson's disease: Critical role for the microbiome*. Frontiers. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fneur.2019.01245>
- *Diet quality and parkinson's disease: Potential strategies for non-motor symptom management*. Parkinsonism & Related Disorders. (2023, August 19). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353802023008957>
- Fact sheet - hydration. (n.d.). <https://www.nm.org/-/media/northwestern/resources/care-areas/neurosciences/northwestern-medicine-fact-sheet-hydration-en.pdf>