

Parkinson's Disease

What is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's is a degenerative neurological disease, which means that it is a disease of the nerves and nervous system that gets worse over time.

Symptoms of Parkinson's can include:

- Shaking or tremor
- Balance problems
- Bradykinesia (slow movements)
- Rigidity of muscles
- Depression
- Sleep disorders
- Changes in behaviour and memory

One of the things that makes Parkinson's difficult to diagnose and to live with is that it is unpredictable. Not all patients display all symptoms, and symptoms do not occur in the same order.

What causes Parkinson's?

Dopamine is a chemical produced in the brain that helps transmit signals to the muscles in the body. In people with Parkinson's, the brain doesn't make enough dopamine because the cells that produce it slowly die. As a result, the muscles in the body get confused and stop working properly – they may start to shake or get stiff (from “Mathur, Soania. (2015) Shaky Hands: A Kid's Guide to Parkinson's Disease).

Doctors don't know why people with Parkinson's stop producing dopamine – it could be from environmental factors including exposure to chemical toxins such as certain insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides. It could be genetic. It could be a combination. More research is needed to fully understand this disease and to help find a cure.

Drugs that are converted to or mimic dopamine can help control symptoms. Deep brain stimulation is a procedure where electrodes are implanted in the brain to help send electrical impulses to the body. Right now there is no cure.

What is 500 Miles for Parkinson's

Harry McMurtry decided to raise money for Parkinson's Disease by walking from his current home town of New York City, to the city where he grew up, Toronto. The distance between these two cities is approximately five hundred miles!! Sue Thompson from Toronto and Dr. Ross Sugar from Baltimore, will be joining Harry on this journey. Harry, Sue and Ross all have Early Onset Parkinson's Disease (which means their Parkinson's was diagnosed before the age of 50).

Harry, Sue and Ross are hoping to raise \$500 000 for Parkinson's research as well as raising awareness of this disease.

Go to **fivehundredmiles.org**

to learn more about Harry, Sue, Ross and what they are doing!!



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Fill in the blanks:

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