Parkinson's generally progresses slowly, sometimes taking years for symptoms to appear. The disease usually strikes adults over age 50, although it has been diagnosed as early as age 20. About 15 percent of Parkinson's patients have a family history of the disease.

Because it develops gradually, most people have many years of productive living after being diagnosed.

Some of the first symptoms commonly experienced with Parkinson's include the following:

Rigidity — Arms and legs become stiff and hard to move

Tremors — Rapid shaking of the hands, arms or legs

Slowed movements — Difficulty starting or completing movements, called bradykinesia

Impaired balance — Lack of balance or difficulty adjusting to sudden changes in position

These symptoms may make it difficult for you to walk, pick up and hold things, eat, write, or react quickly to prevent injury if you fall.

Other symptoms include difficulty speaking or swallowing, drooling, stooped posture, inability to make facial expressions, oily skin, cramped handwriting, shortness of breath, constipation, increased sweating, erectile dysfunction, difficulty sleeping, problems urinating and anxiety.