

## Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive, degenerative neurological condition that affects the control of body movements. It is not contagious and not fatal. It is thought to be genetic in a very small percentage of cases.

Symptoms result from the progressive degeneration of nerve cells in the middle area of the brain. This causes a deficiency in the availability of dopamine, a chemical messenger necessary for smooth, controlled movements. The symptoms of Parkinson's appear when about 70 per cent of the dopamine producing cells cease to function normally.

### A common disease

It is estimated that approximately four people per 1,000 have Parkinson's in Australia, with the incidence increasing to one in 100 over the age of 60. In Australia there are approximately 80,000 people living with Parkinson's, with one in five people with Parkinson's being diagnosed before the age of 50 years. More than 2,225 new cases are diagnosed in Victoria every year

### Physical symptoms vary

The type, number, severity and progression of symptoms varies greatly between individuals. No two people are affected in the same way. Some of the main symptoms are:

- Tremor (shaking)
- Rigidity (muscle stiffness)
- Bradykinesia (slowness of movement)
- Freezing
- Stooped posture
- Shuffling gait
- Micrographia (small handwriting)
- Lethargy.

### Causes are unknown

At present there is no known cause. Research worldwide is investigating possible causes including:

- Pesticides, toxins, chemicals
- Genetic factors
- Head trauma.

### Management of Parkinson's

Parkinson's is managed by:

- Medication
- Neurosurgery
- Multidisciplinary therapy (physiotherapists, dietitians, counsellors).

### Where to get help

- Your neurologist

- Your doctor
- Parkinson's Victoria Tel. 1800 644 189
- Parkinson's support groups
- Movement disorder programs
- Community services at your local council
- Independent Living Centre Tel. (03) 9362 6111

## Where carers can get help

- All of the above
- Carers Victoria Tel. 1800 242 636
- The Brain Foundation Tel. 1800 677 579

## Things to remember

- Parkinson's is a manageable condition.
- The symptoms of Parkinson's vary in number, type, severity and progression.
- No two people will experience the condition the same way, so management will also vary.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Parkinson's Victoria

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