

# Hints and tips 1

## Medications and daily life

This card summarises some useful ideas for coping with everyday life with Parkinson's disease (PD). For full details, please refer back to the main website.

### Managing medications

- Make a written record of your medications, and the times at which you take them.
- Use a pill box with separate compartments to set out each day's doses.
- Set a timer as a reminder to take each dose of medication.
- If you are leaving the house for a period of time, take extra medication with you.
- Keep your medication record with you at all times – especially when going to the doctors or into hospital.
- Ask for your medication in non-childproof bottles, for easier opening.
- Keep the first morning dose of medication by the bedside.
- If your medication causes a feeling of sickness, ask your doctor whether it can be taken with food.
- If you find it difficult to swallow pills, then taking a mouthful of water, or putting the pill into a spoon of fruit purée can help it slip down. However, check this with your doctor, who may recommend alternatives.
- It is helpful to learn about the medications you are taking – don't be afraid to ask your doctor questions.
- If you experience any worrying effects such as hallucinations or confusion, then report these to your doctor immediately.

### Communicating with your doctor

- Prepare for your doctor's appointment – make a list of any points that you wish to discuss, and take this with you.
- You might find it helpful to make a regular diary to record how you have been coping with your symptoms.
- If there is a lot you need to discuss with the doctor, then make this clear when you book your appointment.
- If you keep a list of your medications, then take this to your appointment.
- Make sure that you are honest about your symptoms. Making symptoms seem better or worse than they are will give the doctor a false idea of how the treatment is working.
- Don't feel that you have to use medical words with the doctor – use the language that you feel comfortable with.
- If you don't understand what the doctor says, then say so. Ask if it can be explained again or in another way. It is very important to understand.
- Feel free to write down, or ask the doctor to write down, anything that is said if you feel it will help you remember something important.



## Help with daily life

You may wish to ask about:

- domestic help with housework and food preparation
- regular visits from a nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or speech therapist
- meal delivery services to relieve the pressure of cooking and food shopping
- hospital daycare schemes
- portable medical alert systems (e.g., button that can be worn around the neck or wrist) that allow you to call for medical assistance following an accident such as a fall
- help with transport, or getting a disabled sticker for your car
- temporary help to allow yourself and your carer some time apart.

For extra hints and tips on practical concerns such as dressing and help with home-based tasks, contact your local or national PD association for advice and information on what is available in your area/country.



## Eating and drinking

- Drink plenty of water (8–10 glasses a day).
- If possible, take regular exercise such as a daily walk to help with digestion.
- If eating is slow and tiring, then it may be easier to cope with several small meals a day, rather than three main meals.
- Hot meals can be kept warm on a warming mat or in an insulated bowl.
- It may help to serve drinks in insulated cups with a lid and spout.
- Don't overfill cups, and consider the use of a straw.
- Only put a small amount of food on the fork or spoon to prevent spills.
- It can be easier to eat food that is moist, soft/puréed, or cut into small pieces.
- Serve the meal on a raised level, e.g., put the plate on a small box or stand.
- It may help to place the elbows on the table to steady the hands/arms when eating.
- Using weighted cups can help to prevent tremor when drinking.
- Other eating aids that are available include a combined fork/knife, a 'rocking' knife that cuts one-handed, and cutlery that is easier to hold.

If taking levodopa, speak to your doctor, PD nurse or dietician for tips on avoiding taking this medication with protein-rich meals (which may slow or prevent its action).