

PARKINSON'S DISEASE AND DIET: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

A common concern among those with Parkinson's disease (PD) is the role of nutrition — foods and supplements — in the management of their disease. In order to live life to the fullest, it is important to know how particular foods and supplements interact with PD and to be aware of some potential issues.

Many people ask us about **alcohol**. Because people with PD may have an unsteady gait and balance impairment, they need to be more thoughtful about their alcohol intake than the general population. People should take a common-sense approach of limiting alcohol in mild PD and be extra cautious if there are balance issues from PD. Social drinking for people with mild PD and no balance or gait issues is considered to be fine.

Dairy is another area of concern for those affected by PD. Population studies show a slightly elevated risk of PD in those who report high consumption of dairy as compared to those who don't. The reason for the association between increased risk of PD and dairy is not yet known. The two theories that have been suggested *but not proven* to explain the connection are:

1. Dairy may contain a pesticide that contributes to PD risk.
2. Dairy may lower uric acid in the body — a substance that could protect against PD.

The bottom line is that there is currently not enough information to make a

particular dietary recommendation concerning dairy for people with PD, so it's always best to consult with your doctor.

The “protein effect” is also something often talked about among those with PD. Many have heard that **protein** can interfere with the absorption of levodopa — a commonly prescribed PD medication. On a recent episode of APDA's *Dr. Gilbert Hosts*, Dr. Drew Falconer shed some light on the effects of protein in those with PD. Dr. Falconer explains that the protein effect rarely occurs in early stages of the disease and often never becomes a problem even as the disease progresses. He also says that those with PD should make sure they have the protein effect before they change their eating habits. You can do this by comparing your response to levodopa when eating protein and not eating protein. If the effect is the same, then you don't have the protein effect and you are free to eat whatever you like, whenever you like.

Similarly, common supplements such as **iron** can bind with levodopa and reduce the amount of medication that is absorbed by your system. If you require iron supplementation because of another medical condition, discuss this with your doctor so you can determine how to most effectively get the iron you need while not impacting your PD medications.

Always consult your healthcare team before making any changes to your diet. To learn more about how diet can affect PD, visit apdaparkinson.org/diet.



Need support for
yourself or someone
you know with PD?

Find the help you need
at apdaparkinson.org
or contact us at
apda@apdaparkinson.org
or **800-223-2732**.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Friend,

As a proud supporter of APDA, I know you remain invested in advancing critical research to help uncover the mysteries of PD. Every day, we come closer to a cure — and I'm so grateful to have you by our side as we work to unlock a brighter future for everyone facing PD.



Your generosity makes this life-changing progress possible as we continue making advances in research, improving treatments, and increasing awareness of this disease. I hope you know just how important your role is in our mission to help people with PD live life to the fullest through the many programs, services, and support we offer across the country.

Together, we are giving hope to those facing PD across the United States — and empowering the PD community to look towards the future with optimism. As you read this issue of **APDA Insights**, I am confident you will see the impact of your support — and learn more about the complexities of this chronic disorder. Thank you for all you do to support and strengthen our community.

With sincerest gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie A. Chambers".

Leslie A. Chambers
President & CEO
American Parkinson Disease Association

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR EXERCISE ROUTINE FOR PD

If you or a loved one live with PD, you've likely heard about the benefits of exercise. You know you need to get moving, but it can be overwhelming when there are so many types of exercise classes and activities to choose from. Below, we share some tips on how to get started.



To begin, it's important to understand the **four core elements** of exercise that are important for people with PD:

- 1 Aerobic:** brisk walking, stationary cycling — activities that get the heart pumping
- 2 Strengthening:** using weights or resistance bands to improve muscle strength
- 3 Balance:** tai chi, dance to help you be steadier on your feet
- 4 Stretching:** mat exercises, yoga to improve flexibility

If you are able, including all four of these elements in your exercise regimen is ideal. APDA's *Be Active & Beyond* exercise booklet is a great place to start. You can download it for free at apdaparkinson.org/BeActive.

Remember that doing more isn't always better, and safety should always be your priority. Be sure to talk with your neurologist and primary care doctor to make sure your exercise routine is compatible for you.

If you are looking for some extra input into which exercises will work best for you, you can request a referral for physical therapy. Your physical therapist will work with you for your allotted sessions and then can help you plan an ongoing exercise regimen that is tailored to you.

Fitness classes can also be a great option. The camaraderie of a group setting can help motivate you, and by signing up for a class you may feel more accountable and inclined to show up — and you might make some new friends! It can also be helpful (and fun) to take classes with a friend or family member.

When looking for an exercise class to join, it may take a few attempts to find the types of exercise that suit you best. Look for classes that are specifically for people with PD and led by trained professionals. Start by trying a class or two in your area to see what appeals to you. If you don't like it, don't give up — try a different type of class the next time. If it's more convenient, there are plenty of virtual classes that you can join from home — just visit apdaparkinson.org/events to see an upcoming schedule.

To learn more about the benefits of exercise with PD, visit apdaparkinson.org/exercise.

APDA RESEARCH: EXPLORING TECHNOLOGY

APDA is committed to funding research that advances our understanding of Parkinson's disease (PD) and improves the lives of those affected by it. Two current APDA-funded researchers are exploring innovative technologies that may help people with PD tackle gait and balance issues, among other challenging symptoms.

Dr. James Liao, from the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, is using augmented reality (AR) technology, in which computer-generated visual cues are superimposed onto the real world to help individuals with PD who experience freezing of gait (FOG). FOG is a common gait disorder of PD in which individuals feel as though their feet are glued to the ground and they are unable to take steps forward. Dr. Liao's AR system provides visual cues to guide individuals through their movements and help overcome this freezing.

This technology has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for those with PD, especially as AR devices improve, get smaller, and become more user-friendly.

Dr. Ryan Roemmich, from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Maryland, is using video-based movement assessments to monitor individuals with PD, allowing for the objective and remote measurement of motor symptoms, such as slowness of movement and gait abnormalities, which are hallmarks of PD. These measurements and data can inform care decisions and assist in tele-rehabilitation.

The ability to monitor individuals from a distance has the potential to improve access to care for those who live in remote or underserved areas, as well as reduce the inconvenience of frequent clinic visits for patients and their families. Ideally, this will lead to a user-friendly application for your phone, making it easy to record these videos and measurements with great accuracy that can easily be shared with your doctor.

The research that APDA funds is diverse and innovative, spanning from technology-based interventions to fundamental scientific investigations. We are proud to support researchers like Drs. Liao and Roemmich who are committed to advancing our understanding of PD and improving the lives of those affected by it.

Want to learn more? We spoke to Drs. Liao and Roemmich on a recent episode of APDA's *Dr. Gilbert Hosts* — to view the conversation, look for the *Dr. Gilbert Hosts* playlist on APDA's YouTube channel.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT APDA



Tell Us Your Story!

We want to hear your personal PD story of optimism.

Go to www.apdaparkinson.org/stories to submit your own story and to read other stories of inspiration and honesty in our Story Gallery. Your story could help another person on their own journey, and that's pretty amazing. Every story can make a difference — we can't wait to hear yours.



Walk for PD!

Looking for a fun and meaningful way to make a difference in the fight against PD? Look no further than APDA's Optimism Walk event series! Every year, amazing people come together at Optimism Walks across the country to raise awareness and support a worthy cause.

Plus, it's fun for the whole family! Don't miss your chance to walk with us and enjoy a day of inspiration and camaraderie, while having a real impact on the lives of those affected by Parkinson's.

Visit www.apdaparkinson.org/optimism-walks for event locations and dates.



“ASK THE DOCTOR”

with Dr. Rebecca Gilbert



Q: Are there any vitamins or supplements that can slow down progression of Parkinson’s disease?

A: Much has been tested, but there has not been a particular nutritional supplement that has been proven to slow down progression of PD.

However, even though we don’t have evidence of the need to take a specific supplement, we do have evidence that a Mediterranean or MIND diet is good for brain health. These diets emphasize whole grains, vegetables, nuts, legumes and berries. Fish is the preferred protein and olive oil is the preferred fat. Recently, a study was published that showed that adherence to the MIND diet and the Mediterranean diet was associated with later onset of PD. So it seems that “the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts” — a combination of healthy, plant based eating does more for PD than any one element of that diet.

Q: I am frequently dizzy. Could this be connected to my Parkinson’s?

A: The most common cause of dizzy spells that are related to Parkinson’s is poor regulation of blood pressure which can lead to sudden drops in blood pressure. This typically occurs when you are changing head position — moving from lying down to sitting, or sitting to standing. The way you would know whether you have this problem is by taking your blood pressure sitting and standing and seeing if there is a drop in blood pressure when you stand. Ideally, you would take your blood pressure when you are having a dizzy spell (that is, if your blood pressure is normal during a dizzy spell, then the dizzy spell is not due to blood pressure drops). If your dizzy spells are due to drops in blood pressure, then there are lifestyle changes such as increasing salt and fluids in the diet that can help. If lifestyle changes aren’t enough, then there are medications that can be prescribed that can help to maintain blood pressure.

Q: When I discussed my medication doses with people in my support group, I found that I am taking more than most people. Should I talk with my doctor about lowering my medication?

A: I would try not to compare your treatment with others — since everyone is different. The important thing is whether your symptoms are well treated at this dose, and you do not have side effects. You can certainly talk with your doctor about lowering the dose to determine if you get the same benefits on a lower dose. However, it is definitely possible that when your doctor reviews your chart, he/she will find that you were on a lower dose previously and it was not as effective, which is why you are on your current dose.

Dr. Rebecca Gilbert is the Chief Scientific Officer at APDA. She oversees APDA’s research portfolio in conjunction with APDA’s Scientific Advisory Board. She also provides medical and clinical expertise to support APDA programming as well as print and web content.

PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR PD

Walking and balance challenges are common issues for people with PD. Mobility can provide you with independence and an increased quality of life, so it is important to do all that you can to maintain mobility, while also keeping yourself safe.

Physical therapy (PT) can be an important part of your treatment plan so be sure to talk to your doctor about the possibility of incorporating PT, or at least getting a baseline PT evaluation to start.

APDA has a great web series that can help: ***Let’s Keep Moving With APDA***. Each webinar is hosted by a physical therapist

from APDA’s National Rehabilitation Resource Center for Parkinson’s Disease at Boston University. Each episode focuses on a different aspect of exercise and movement, with the goal of helping people with PD move more easily, tackle the gait and balance issues they may be facing, and to take a proactive role in their overall fitness, wellness, and mobility.

Check out the *Let’s Keep Moving* playlist on APDA’s YouTube channel. Need help finding a PT near you? Contact the APDA Rehab Resource Center at **888-606-1688**.



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