

OVERVIEW OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE (PD)

FACTS

- PD is the second most common brain disorder after Alzheimer's disease.
- The cells that produce dopamine, a brain chemical important to movement and mood, slowly die off.
- The decrease in dopamine causes both motor and non-motor symptoms.
- PD slowly progresses as more cells stop functioning.

SYMPTOMS

Motor

- Tremor or rhythmic shaking of arms, legs, chin, or lip
- Slow, small, and stiff movement
- Shuffling gait
- Impaired balance and falls
- Soft or hoarse voice

Non-motor

- Neuropsychiatric
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Apathy
 - Late symptoms
 - Hallucinations
 - Delusions
 - Dementia

- Autonomic abnormalities
 - Read the website document Autonomic Abnormalities for more information.
- Sleep disorders
 - Insomnia
 - Excessive sleep
 - Sleep apnea
 - Nightmares
 - Acting out dreams including screaming, kicking, and punching

RISK FACTORS

- Advancing age with average onset in the 60's
- 5-10% of people with PD have a family history
- Repeated head trauma
- REM behavior disorder

DIAGNOSIS

- A diagnosis is usually made by looking for the key motor symptoms and ruling out other conditions, such as:
 - Multiple strokes
 - Exposure to certain toxins
 - Some psychiatric medications
- A DaTscan is a special brain scan that can help diagnose PD.

TREATMENT

- Motor symptoms are treated with medications that mimic dopamine.
- Non-motor symptoms are treated in various ways.
- Exercise is essential for managing the motor symptoms and can slow the progression of PD.