

10 Tips for a Healthy Winter with Parkinson's Disease



courtesy: www.michaeljfox.org

Whether you're traveling for winter holidays or staying warm at home, the season can bring along plenty of fun with family and friends but some stressors, too.

There are a few precautions people with Parkinson's can take to ensure the holiday season and the rest of winter is as healthy as possible.

Keep a routine:

Even if you're on vacation or have family visiting, be sure to exercise, get enough sleep and take your medications at the same time as usual.

Avoid the temptation to overeat or drink at holiday parties:

Indulge in a treat or two but stick to your usual diet as much as possible, Rachel Dolhun, MD, recommends. "This is especially pertinent with regard to combining protein and carbidopa/levodopa (Sinemet) — try to take medication 30 minutes before or 60 minutes after meals and save most protein (ham or turkey, for example) for later in the day," says Dr. Dolhun.

Watch out for depressive symptoms:

Depression is common in Parkinson's disease, and the shorter days and colder weather may lead one to feel more blue. Talk to your doctor right away if you feel you might be depressed.

Be careful of slippery conditions and ice:

Speaking of cold weather, ice and slippery conditions can be particularly hazardous if you're having trouble with balance. Walk in cleared walkways as much as possible, wear shoes with non-slip tread rubber on the bottom and bring along a cane or walker. You can even try ski poles or walking sticks to help steady yourself if necessary.

Keep a winter emergency kit handy in your home:

Be sure to include several emergency light sources like battery-operated lanterns or touch lights, as well as spare batteries. Navigating a dark home can be particularly dangerous with gait or balance difficulties.

Don't isolate yourself:

If you've recently been diagnosed or your symptoms have worsened since you last saw certain friends and family, it can be tempting to sit out of holiday gatherings. But, social activities can help lift your mood and help reduce stress. "Participate in social activities as you are able and comfortable doing," says Dr. Dolhun. "Attend a Christmas concert, bake cookies with a friend or go on a walk with neighbors to view outdoor decorations."

Give yourself a break:

Don't feel pressured to participate in every festive activity you're invited to. Again, stick to your regular schedule as much as possible. When you do decide to partake, allow extra time to prepare for and travel to activities so you don't feel rushed or stressed.

Take advantage of online shopping:

Do your gift buying online and avoid the malls if they are anxiety-provoking or make symptoms worse.

Be prepared when traveling:

Consider letting airport staff know that you have Parkinson's disease -- you may be able to board the flight early or get extra help from a flight attendant. Also, be sure to always keep your medication on your person, rather than in a checked bag.

Have fun and enjoy the season!

This is an easy one!