



# SAFETY FIRST

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## HOW TO STAY SAFE WHILE EXERCISING

When starting a new exercise routine, safety should always come first. By taking a few precautions, exercise can be both effective and safe. Here are some key factors to keep in mind before getting started. First and foremost, checking in with a healthcare provider is essential before starting a new exercise routine. If you have already checked with your doctor, ask yourself questions such as, “Are there any exercises I should avoid based on my current symptoms and mobility?” and “How might my medications affect my energy levels or movement during exercise?” These questions can help guide the types of exercises you include into your routine, and what time of the day you might have more energy.

Secondly, when exercising safely, it is important to make sure your environment is safe to move in. This can look like getting rid of any tripping or slipping hazards before starting. You may be experiencing balance issues that can make you feel less confident when moving. Although this can be discouraging, there are steps we can take to prevent falls. Making sure your exercise space has a stable surface, like a wall or sturdy chair, can provide additional support and limit the risk of falling. Avoid cluttered spaces and slippery floors that could cause tripping or slipping hazards. Focus on slow, controlled movements rather than quick sudden motions. If you are exercising with others, ask them to check your form when exercising to make sure you are moving in a safe way. If you are exercising alone, and are nervous about falls, keep a phone nearby in case of an emergency. Footwear is also crucial in preventing falls and injury. Wear supportive, non-slip shoes to ensure stability and fall prevention. Avoid shoes with thick soles, as they can make it harder to maintain balance.

It is also important to know your limits. Listen to your body and avoid pushing too hard. Feeling challenged is good, but it is different from overexertion. Start with gentle exercises and gradually increase intensity as your body adapts. If you are unsure of how to

modify an exercise, physiotherapists, chiropractors, Parkinson Association staff, or exercise class teachers can assist you in modifying exercise. Do not be afraid to ask questions because these professionals want to help you. Especially when it can prevent injury and will make exercise safe and enjoyable for you.

Another safety factor we often do not think about is staying properly hydrated. Dehydration can lead to dizziness and fatigue. Be sure to drink enough fluids before, during, and after exercise, especially if you are sweating. Staying properly hydrated also aids in preventing constipation and digestive issues, which can be common for people with Parkinson's.

A common experience for those with Parkinson's is a sudden drop in blood pressure when standing up, which can cause dizziness or fainting. To prevent this, rise slowly from seated or lying positions and hold on to a stable surface nearby if needed. Taking breaks between exercises can also help regulate your body's response. If you experience dizziness often, make sure to eat before exercising but give yourself at least 30 minutes to an hour after eating before beginning any activity. In addition, make sure there is something sturdy nearby to hold onto in case a dizzy spell occurs and try to get yourself in a seated or laying position until the dizziness passes.

Finally, everyone's journey with Parkinson's is unique, and abilities differ from one person to the next. This means that not all exercises are suitable for everyone. Modify movements based on your comfort level. For example, perform seated exercises if standing is difficult, use resistance bands instead of heavy weights, and take frequent breaks to adjust intensity as needed. Abilities and symptoms may change on a daily basis, so be sure to check in with your body each day before exercising. Remember, the goal is to stay active in a way that feels safe and enjoyable for you.