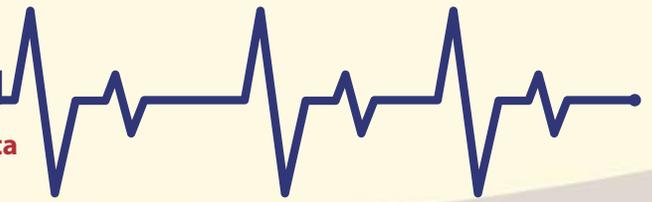


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Summer 2025

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Parkinson Association of Alberta is the source for support, education and inspiration for people impacted by Parkinson disease and Parkinson's Plus Syndromes, and engagement in important quality of life research with an emphasis on Alberta.



Articles and information contained in the Parkinson Pulse are provided solely for the reader's interest.

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Parkinson Association of Alberta and are NOT intended as medical advice. Please consult your doctor or neurologist in all matters relating to health concerns or medication.

CONTACT US

Toll-free: **1-800-561-1911**

Email: **info@parkinsonassociation.ca**

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THANK YOU

MAY 24, 2025
CALGARY

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to making our inaugural One of a Kind Brunch a success. We welcomed 170 guests who were inspired by Ryan Oevermann's presentation. Together we proudly raised \$25,000 for our Parkinson's community!





Message from our Executive Director

Dear friends,

It's been a busy few months at Parkinson Association of Alberta with some really special connections and experiences made through Parkinson Awareness Month, our One-of-a-Kind Brunch and all the educational, support and active events in between. We are eternally grateful to be even a small part of your Parkinson's journey, and we thank you for your ongoing engagement and the motivation you provide to our team.

Speaking of motivation, the theme of this edition of Pulse is fitness and exercise. The role of exercise in PD cannot be understated. Following a 2008 research study, B.E. Fisher states "Physical activity may promote neuroprotection and modify the course of Parkinson's disease by enhancing dopamine synthesis and reducing neuroinflammation." In slightly less science-y terms, the Davis Phinney Foundation says "Exercise is as important as medication in the management of Parkinson's disease. It improves quality of life and has long-term benefits for symptoms.". Something similar might be said for care-partners and truly, all of us, in that regular activity promotes a wide variety of physical, mental and social benefits. I don't think this is new news to any of us.

But how do we get or stay motivated to move? What are the best exercises and why? Are we able to exercise safely? These are the kinds of questions addressed in the pages that follow. Thank you to the wonderful Rachel Kubitz, who researched and wrote the articles for this edition. Rachel is a Bachelor of Health and Physical Education student at Mount Royal University. She was inspired by her dad, who was diagnosed with Parkinson disease in 2024, to spend time with us this spring for her practicum. We are grateful for her knowledge and efforts in pulling together this very helpful information.

As we look forward to our annual Step 'n Stride Walk for Parkinson's this fall, we wish you all a peaceful and relaxing summer.

All the best,



Lana



Life is Movement

EXERCISE & FITNESS

Written By: Brandi La Bonte

The ability to walk, to reach and stretch, to move in general is not something one regularly thinks about. In fact, it's something many take for granted. Until one morning out of the blue when you wake up with a kink in your neck because you slept funny, or your regular Tuesday evening round of golf leaves you feeling stiff and sore, or you reach up into a higher cupboard and feel your back twinge. Biology's quirky little way of reminding us we've reached a certain, let's say vintage.

And even though aging is a privilege, the start of those physical challenges can seem shocking. Now let's add another layer – accidents, illness, or being diagnosed with a disease that impacts and impedes movement.

It's easy, I think, to feel that invincible feeling of "it can't happen to me; I'm too young, I'm too healthy." But, as with the act of aging itself, these things just happen. No one ever plans to be diagnosed with Parkinson disease. Suddenly the ability to reach into a cupboard, to put on your coat, or go for a walk is not something you can take for granted anymore.

With both aging and/or Parkinson's compromising our ability to move, we must choose to put in the time and effort required to keep pushing forward. In this issue we focus on the number one thing we ALL need to do to keep us moving...exercise.

I'm pretty sure when you just read the word "exercise" you fell into one of three groups of people. First – the Keeners, the ones whose daily/weekly routine already consists of some type of purposeful exercise. (AH-mazing, good job, and well done YOU!!) The second group – the Some-timers, the ones who know they should exercise and try to exercise but can't seem to make it a consistent habit; maybe you take a walk or hit up an exercise class every once in a while. (Don't get discouraged, it's a start and every day is a new day to try again!) And finally, the Exercise-averse – the ones who again know they should exercise but for a variety of reasons don't. Maybe its apathy, you're not sure where to start, or you simply don't want to. (I see you; I feel you; I AM you!)

Exercise is important for everyone. For millennia, medical evidence has provided overwhelming support for the benefits exercise provides. In ancient China (2500-250 BC), for example, philosophical teachings encouraged participation in regular physical activity as well as noting that inactivity was associated with certain disease¹. Exercise offers numerous benefits from improved physical and mental health to increased energy, enhanced cognitive function, and today exercise is recommended as part of most daily routines for all people of all ages and for almost every condition from depression to arthritis to Parkinson disease.

Living with Parkinson's and aging well takes strength – a strong body, a strong mind, and a strong heart (figuratively and literally). Exercise can help you achieve all three. It lowers the risk of falls, improves sleep, reduces the risk of developing dementia and/or depression, strengthens bone density, can help prevent heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, improves cognition, and, when done in a group setting, reduces social isolation. Added benefits for people with Parkinson's include some symptom management and the possibility of slowing the progression of the disease.

I move, therefore I am

So what exercise option is right for you? That, my friends, is entirely up to you. Some people like to find one thing and stick to it, while others like to engage in a variety of options. Oftentimes with exercise programs if it becomes too easy or too boring you may find yourself becoming less motivated to keep it up. It is key to find something that is not only beneficial, but fun to do! But, if you are not sure where to start or how to get started, we offer exercise programs in-person and online; AND our Client Services Coordinators can help you find additional exercise opportunities to best suit your needs across Alberta, Northwest Territories, and beyond those borders.

At Parkinson Association of Alberta, the ability to not only move, but enjoy movement is something we promote, share and celebrate. Start moving, keep moving, and keep pushing forward for your health, safety, and independence.

References

¹ *The History of Fitness* – Lance C. Dalleck, MS & Len Kravitz, PhD – University of New Mexico (2002)

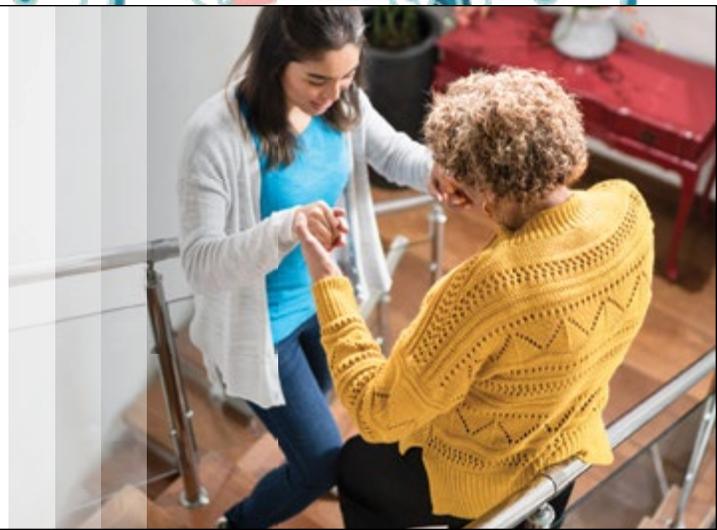


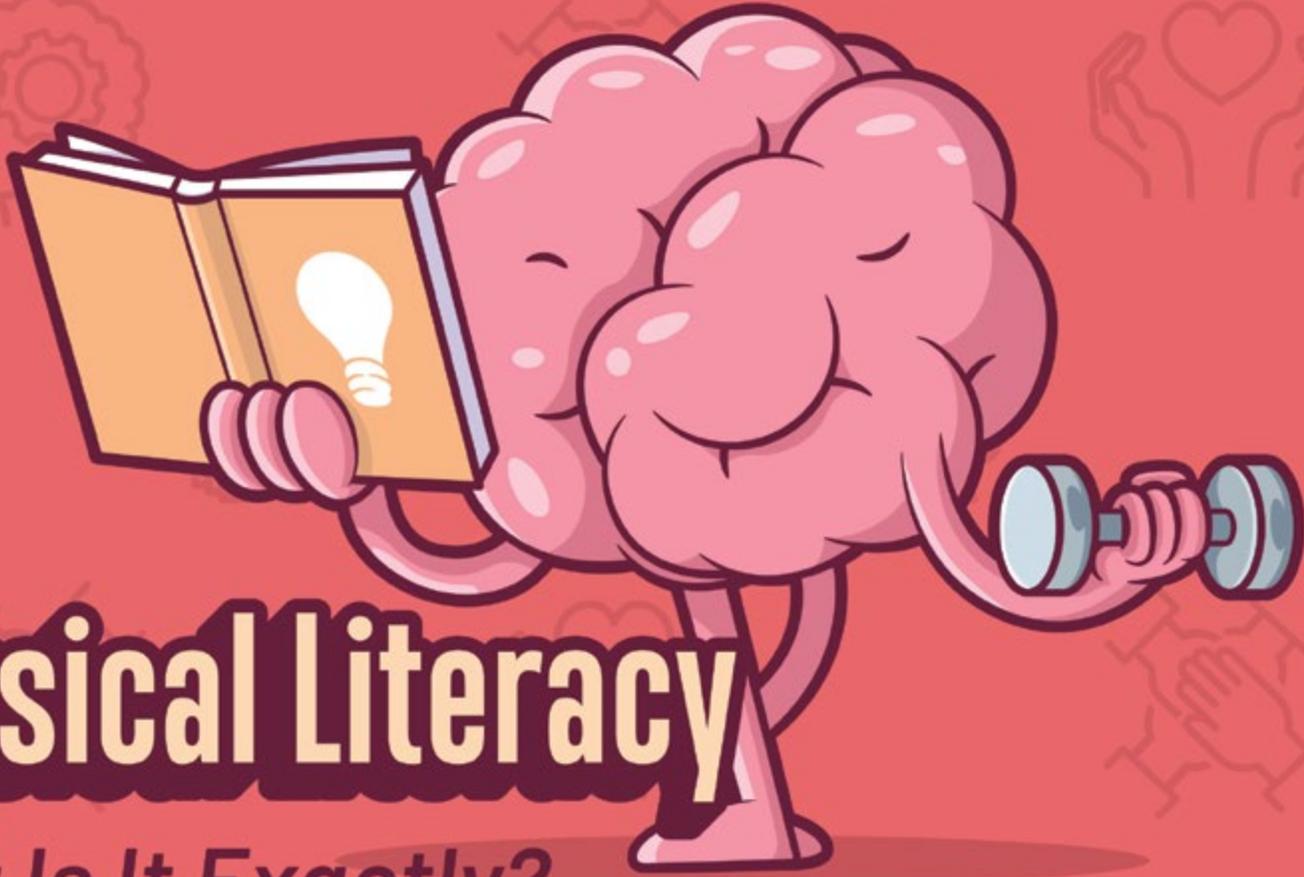
Courage to care

During Parkinson's Awareness Month and beyond, we stand with those affected and the caregivers who support them.



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Physical Literacy

What Is It Exactly?

Written by: Rachel Kubitz

What is Physical Literacy?

Physical literacy sounds like a big fancy term, but essentially, it is the ability, confidence, and desire to move in ways that help us navigate daily life, stay active, and enjoy movement. If we break that down, having the ability does not mean having the ability to be an athlete. It means the ability to move your body in a way that is safe and enjoyable for you, no matter age, disability or previous experience. When we talk about confidence, we are talking about being comfortable in movement that feels right for you. As physical literacy students, our goal is to make sure those around us have the skills to stay active for life. Having the desire to move can be difficult, even for me, despite being a physical literacy student. Especially when it is the middle of winter and I am cuddled up under a blanket, watching my favorite show with some snacks. I do not always feel my best and even though I know a lot about being physically active, there are days when I too lack confidence which can make exercise seem impossible. Life has its ups and

downs, and some days will be harder than others. Oftentimes, people within the exercise industry will give you a motivational speech on all the benefits of exercise, as if that will motivate you to be physically active. In physical literacy, we like to take away the pressure of the term “exercise” as this often sounds like a chore. Instead, think of physical activity as simply moving your body. Whether that is a dance party in your living room, a short walk outside or doing some light stretching in the morning. Exercise does not have to look like an exhausting workout at the gym to be effective and beneficial. I want you to remember that as you read the rest of the articles in this magazine. The goal is to enjoy movement, so you are internally motivated to be physically active. This does not only mean knowing the benefits, but it also means finding something you enjoy and is fun for you. It is not just about exercise, it is about feeling capable in your body and knowing how to move safely and effectively in different situations. Remember, physical literacy looks different for everyone. No matter where you are in life or what challenges you are facing, physical literacy is adaptable for everyone.

For someone with Parkinson's, physical literacy can mean having the balance and coordination to walk across a room without fear of falling, the strength to stand up from a chair independently, or the endurance to do your favourite hobbies with confidence. It is also about understanding how movement affects the body and how to make movement something you can look forward to. Being physically literate does not mean being an athlete, it means feeling confident in movement. Movement does not have to mean exercising either. It encompasses all movement we do, whether that is reaching for a cup in the cupboard, stepping onto a curb, or stretching in the morning to ease stiffness. The more comfortable and capable

someone feels in their movement, the more likely they are to stay active, which can improve overall health, maintain independence, and enhance quality of life. When we talk about physical activity, we often only focus on the physical benefits of movement. However, physical literacy tackles all aspects of health, beyond just physical aspects. It is important to understand how all areas of well-being influence and interact with each other. For those with Parkinson's, symptoms can be motor and non-motor related. By understanding the four domains of physical literacy, movement can play a crucial role in addressing and improving a variety of Parkinson's related symptoms and potentially slowing the progression of the disease.

The Four Domains of Physical Literacy

Physical literacy is made up of four key areas: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. Each plays a role in how we move and engage with the world around us.



1. Physical Domain

The physical domain includes the physical aspect of exercise, such as strengthening your muscles. These skills help individuals perform everyday tasks, from walking and standing to gripping objects and turning in bed.



For someone with Parkinson's, physical challenges such as muscle stiffness, tremors, and balance issues can make movement difficult. A well-rounded approach to physical activity such as exercises to maintain muscle strength, stretching to reduce stiffness, and balance training to prevent falls can make a significant difference. For example, a person with Parkinson's may struggle to rise from a chair due to muscle weakness and reduced coordination. Practicing sit-to-stand exercises can help strengthen leg muscles and make it easier to get up independently.



2. Emotional Domain

Parkinson's is caused by a lack of dopamine, which does not only effect motor symptoms, but can cause emotional symptoms as well. Since dopamine is your "feel good" chemical in the brain, having a lack of dopamine can cause symptoms such as depression, anxiety and apathy. These symptoms are common for those with



Parkinson's. If you have been feeling these symptoms, you are not alone. Exercise can help manage these symptoms as exercise has been shown to increase dopamine production in the brain and make it easier for body to use. In addition, many people with Parkinson's experience a fear of falling, or frustration due to difficulties with movement, which can lead to

avoiding physical activity all together. Over time, this can result in further loss of strength and mobility.

By focusing on small, achievable goals and celebrating progress, individuals can build confidence in their movement. Finding activities that are fun for you, such as dancing, yoga, or even light stretching, can help keep motivation high and improve emotional symptoms. A person with Parkinson's who fears falling may avoid walking in crowded areas. Working on balance exercises in a safe environment and gradually increasing exposure to different walking conditions can help rebuild confidence and independence.



3. Social Domain

Movement is often a social experience, whether it is taking a group exercise class, going for a walk with a friend, or even doing stretches with a loved one. Staying socially engaged through physical activity can combat isolation and depression, as well as promoting feelings of connection.

Exercising with others also provides encouragement and accountability, making it easier to stay active. Group activities such as dance classes, boxing programs, or tai chi can offer both physical benefits and social support. A person with Parkinson's who struggles with motivation may find it easier to stick to an exercise routine when participating in a group class. Finding a support system of individuals with a similar experience can provide encouragement to yourself as well as to the others around you. Further, creating a positive, engaging atmosphere that promotes consistent activity.



4. Cognitive Domain

Movement is not just about the body; it is also about the brain. When you decide to move, your brain sends signals to tell your muscles what to do. In Parkinson's, movement can be more difficult and may feel stiff or delayed, because these signals from the brain are not reaching your muscles, which can understandably be frustrating for those with Parkinson's. In turn, this can discourage motivation to engage in movement.



By combining movement with cognitive exercises, it strengthens the connection between your brain and body. These types of cognitive exercises challenge the brain to send those signals to your muscles more effectively. In addition to improvements in motor symptoms, exercise can improve memory, decision making, focus and problem solving. Your brain is like your muscles. If you challenge your brain, it becomes stronger and works better in the way you need it to.

Why Does This Matter?

Each domain of physical literacy is intertwined, working on one area naturally supports the others. Understanding physical literacy can help you or a loved one stay active in a way that feels right for your abilities and lifestyle. By focusing on all four domains, people with Parkinson's can maintain mobility, support brain function, build confidence, and remain socially connected, all of which contribute to a better quality of life. Movement is more than just structured exercise it is a tool for living well with Parkinson's.





Meet This Issue's Guest Author

Rachel Kubitz

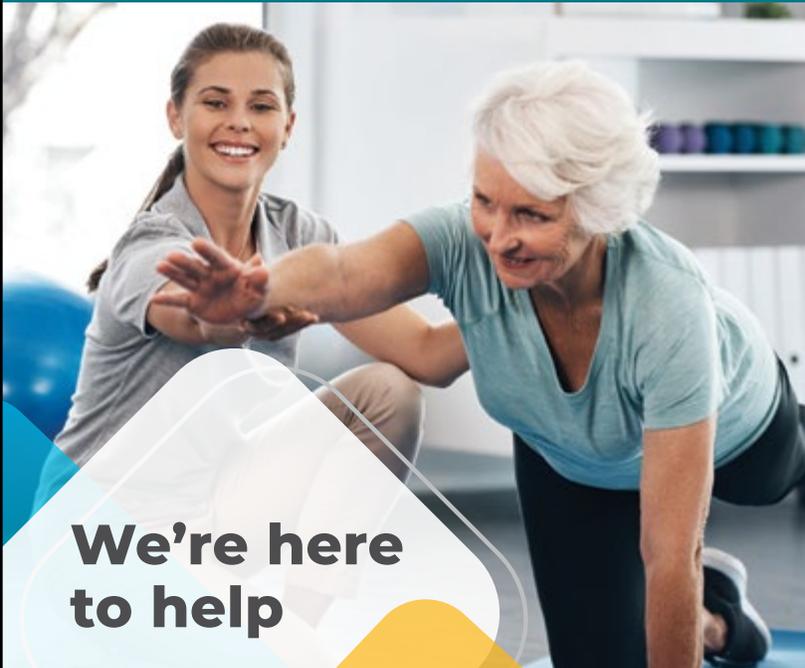
Hello Readers! My name is Rachel Kubitz, and I am a student at Mount Royal University in my final year of study. I am in the Bachelor of Health and Physical Education, majoring in Physical Literacy. Currently, I am completing my practicum with the Parkinson Association of Alberta. My passion for helping those with Parkinson's first started when my dad, who has been my hero all my life, was diagnosed with Parkinson Disease in 2024. I hope that through this magazine, my knowledge of movement and its impact on health will inspire you to incorporate physical activity into your life, even if it may feel daunting at first. By finding joy in movement, individuals can experience its many benefits, including enhancing strength, boosting confidence, and improving overall well-being.

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ONE STEP AT A TIME



What Are The Benefits of Exercise?

Written By: Rachel Kubitz

The Benefits of Exercise:

Exercise is essential for everyone. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Beyond physical health, exercise boosts mental well-being by releasing feel-good chemicals a great way to meet new people, make friends, and connect with others with similar interests. No matter a person's age or ability, moving regularly has benefits both physically and mentally.

How Exercise Helps People with Parkinson's Disease

Exercising with Parkinson's can understandably seem like a daunting task. These feelings are valid when navigating a condition like Parkinson's. However, research shows that people with Parkinson's who stay active experience improved symptoms. In addition, new research is also showing that exercise may help slow the progression of Parkinson's disease. Physical activity plays a crucial role in managing Parkinson's by improving both motor and non-motor symptoms. Although it may feel overwhelming to start, incorporating a mix of strength training, aerobic exercise, flexibility, balance, and mental health focused activities can significantly benefit anyone with Parkinson Disease.

Strength Training

Practicing strength training exercises improves muscle strength and can allow you to feel more confident and capable in your movement. You or your loved one may be experiencing muscle weakness or struggle with coordination. These symptoms can make tasks like standing up from a chair or climbing stairs difficult. Exercises focused on building muscle strength like sit-to-stand squats strengthen the legs, making it easier to get up from a seated position. You may also feel discouraged to workout due to a fear of falling. With Parkinson's, instability or balance issues are common. Incorporating core strengthening exercises that focus on the abdominal, back and leg muscles can greatly improve stability and increase self-confidence. With consistency and practice, strength training can help improve many symptoms you may be facing.

Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise (also known as cardio), like walking, cycling, or dancing, can help with symptoms such as poor sleep and apathy. Sleep can be especially challenging when living with Parkinson's. You might feel exhausted but still struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep, whether it is from discomfort, stiffness, pain, or needing to move in bed. Regular aerobic activity may help improve your sleep by helping you fall asleep faster, sleep more deeply, and feel more rested when you wake up.

Apathy (a loss of interest or motivation) can be harder to manage. It is common with Parkinson's and can make even small tasks feel overwhelming, especially if you are already dealing with low energy. Exercise will not fix apathy overnight, and it is not just about having more energy. But getting into a regular routine with aerobic movement, especially if you find a form you enjoy, might help shift your mood and give you a sense of accomplishment. Even small improvements in sleep or mood can make a difference in how you feel about taking that next step.

An additional benefit of aerobic exercise is that it can reduce constipation. Moving your body does indeed get everything moving... That includes your bowels and the contents inside them, making bowel movements easier and more frequent. Cardio is a great way to warm up your muscles before jumping into other exercises like strength training. However, if it is the only exercise you do, it is one of the best forms of movement to incorporate into your routine.

Flexibility and Balance Exercises

Flexibility and balance exercises are just as important as strength and aerobic activity. Parkinson's can cause stiffness, especially in the morning, making it harder to move comfortably. Light stretching can help loosen tight muscles, improve your range of motion, and make everyday tasks, like getting dressed or reaching for objects easier. Balance exercises can improve posture, stability, and coordination, which helps reduce the risk of falls. Over time, regular flexibility and balance training can support smoother, safer movement throughout your day.

These types of exercises also help with specific movement challenges that are common in Parkinson's, like freezing or shuffling steps. Practicing balance can make it easier to shift your weight from one foot to the other, turn more safely, or walk on uneven ground.

Flexibility work, especially when focused on the neck, shoulders, hips, and ankles, can improve the way you move during daily routines. Including these exercises a few times a week, even for a short time, can help maintain independence and make movement feel more natural.

Mental and Emotional Benefits

Exercise is not just good for your body, it can help your mind, too. Living with Parkinson's can come with a lot of emotional ups and downs. You might feel frustrated, anxious, or even down for no clear reason. That is completely normal. But moving your body, even a little, can help lift your mood. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals like dopamine. These can help you feel more relaxed, more positive, and less stressed.

For example, if you are feeling isolated or stuck at home, going for a walk with a friend or joining a local fitness class can give you both movement and social connection. If you have been feeling low, something as simple as stretching, dancing to music, or riding a stationary bike can shift your focus and help you feel a little more like yourself again. Many people with Parkinson's also say that when they feel stressed, motor symptoms like tremors get worse. By creating a routine that is fun, exercise can help reduce stress and make you feel more in control of your day.

It does not have to be intense or perfect. Just moving your body in a way that feels good to you can go a long way in supporting your mental well-being.

Closing Thoughts

Incorporating regular exercise into your life can be one of the most powerful tools for managing Parkinson's. From improving strength, balance, and mobility to supporting better sleep, digestion, and emotional well-being, the benefits extend far beyond just physical fitness. New research is looking promising that exercise may help preserve dopamine producing structures in the brain, potentially slowing the progression of the disease and delaying the onset of symptoms. Building an exercise routine is about prioritizing the needs of future you. It is okay to start small, go at your own pace, and modify movements to meet your body where it is at daily. Whether you enjoy exercising alone, with a friend, in a group, or online, what matters most is that you keep moving in a way that feels good for you. You do not have to do it perfectly, just keep showing up for yourself, one step at a time.

STEP N'

LOCATIONS

CALGARY SATURDAY, SEPT 6

South Glenmore Park 9AM - 1PM

CAMROSE SUNDAY, SEPT 7

Grand Drive Park 1PM - 4PM

EDMONTON SATURDAY, SEPT 6

Rundle Park ACT Centre 9AM - 1PM

COCHRANE SUNDAY, SEPT 7

Mitford Park 1PM - 4PM

LETHBRIDGE SATURDAY, SEPT 6

Henderson Lake Park 9AM - 1PM

NEW TIME!

GRANDE PRAIRIE SUNDAY, SEPT 7

Muskoseepi Park 1PM - 4PM

RED DEER SATURDAY, SEPT 6

Canada 150 Square at Capstone 9AM - 1PM

NEW DATE + TIME!

LLOYDMINSTER SUNDAY, SEPT 7

Bud Miller Park 1PM - 4PM

OLDS SATURDAY, SEPT 6

Rotary Park 1PM - 4PM

YELLOWKNIFE SATURDAY, SEPT 13

Somba K'e Park & Plaza 1PM - 4PM

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 - Kids tent
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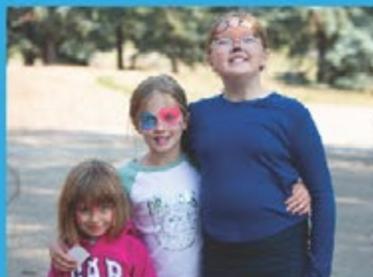
WHY WE WALK

We walk at Step 'n Stride to **highlight the impact** of Parkinson Disease and Atypical Parkinsonism, which affects over **1 in 500** people across Canada, including more than **15,000 Albertans**.

We walk to **raise funds** to provide the programs and services that our communities rely on.

We walk to **support** our loved ones and those we care for.

We walk to **PUSH** forward and create an **impact**.



MANAGE YOUR SYMPTOMS AND HAVE SOME FUN!

What are the best exercises for Parkinson's?

Written By: Rachel Kubitz

You may have heard people talk about boxing, dance, or PWR! Moves as “the best” exercise for Parkinson's. And while they all have great benefits, the truth is, there is no one-size-fits-all answer. The best exercise is the one you enjoy, the one that works for your body, and most importantly, the one you can do consistently. Whether that is walking in the park, doing yoga in your living room, or joining a group class, all movement matters. If you are moving your body in a way that feels good and safe, then you are already doing it right.

Sometimes even the word “exercise” can feel overwhelming. It might bring up memories of gym class or intense workouts that do not feel doable right now. Instead, try thinking of it as “movement.” Moving your body does not have to mean lifting heavy weights or running a marathon. It can be as simple as marching in place, stretching in a chair, or taking your dog for a slow walk. The key is to find something you enjoy, because when you enjoy it, you are more likely to stick with it.

How Do You Like to Move?

Some people love the energy of a group class, Boxing, dancing, or Parkinson-specific programs like PWR!



Moves can be motivating and fun, plus they give you a chance to socialize and connect with others. Others might prefer exercising alone, or from the comfort of home. Online videos, yoga apps, or even movement breaks during your favorite show are great ways to get moving without leaving the house. Still unsure? Try a few different options and see what feels best. There is no right or wrong way, just the way that works for you. There are 4 main categories of exercise, strength training, cardio (aerobic exercise), balance and flexibility. Incorporating all these categories into your routine ensures a well-rounded exercise plan that addresses the benefits we want to take advantage of. To get you thinking of some ideas, here is a breakdown of the categories of exercise:



Cardio (Aerobic Exercise)

Aerobic exercises increase your heart rate and breathing rate. This includes things like walking, cycling, dancing, or swimming. These exercises can help with daily activities like walking more smoothly and increasing stride length.



Strength Training

Strength training exercises challenge the strength of your muscles such as lifting weights, using resistance bands or even body weight exercises like sit-to-stands. This makes everyday tasks like getting up from a chair or carrying groceries feel easier and safer.



Balance Exercises

Balance exercises help you stay sturdy and in control of your body. Practicing standing on one foot, yoga, or trying tai chi can help prevent falls and improve stability.



Flexibility & Stretching

Yoga, gentle stretching, or Pilates helps reduce stiffness and improve range of motion. A few minutes in the morning or before bed can make a big difference.

How Can You Modify Movements to Make Them Work for You?

Modifying exercises does not mean doing less, it means doing what works best for your body. For example, if balance is tricky, you can do strength or cardio exercises from a seated position. Instead of standing lunges, try marching while sitting. If getting on the floor feels unsafe, do stretches using a chair or lying on a firm couch. You can even use soup cans as light weights or a towel as a resistance band. It is all about making movement fit you, not the other way around.



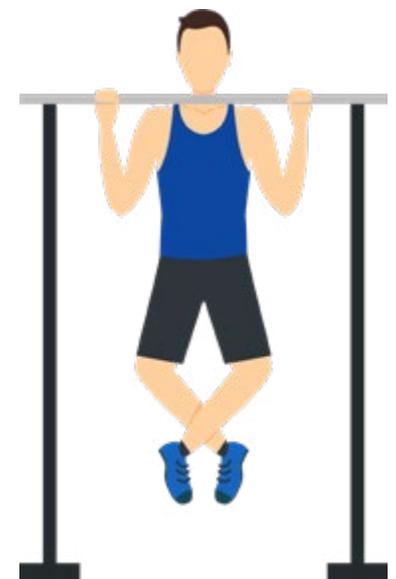
It is easy to compare yourself to what you used to do, or what others are doing. But the truth is, Parkinson's looks different for everyone. Some days your body will feel stronger, and other days it might not. That is normal. What matters most is showing up, whether that is for five minutes of stretching or a full workout. Every little bit helps. The goal is not to be perfect. It is to be consistent.

Movement becomes easier when it becomes part of your daily routine. Try adding it to something you already do, like stretching while waiting for the kettle to boil, or

going for a walk after lunch. With practice and a little creativity, movement can become not only an amazing way to manage symptoms but have fun too.

Final Thoughts

At the end of the day, the "best" exercise for Parkinson's is the one that feels right for you. It is the one you enjoy, the one that fits your routine, and the one that keeps you moving. Whether it is dancing, walking, stretching, or boxing, every step, stretch, and squat counts. And remember, you are not alone in this. There are people and programs ready to support you every step of the way. There is no perfect time to start, and there will always be a reason not to. So, start where you are, keep moving forward and enjoy the process along the way.



GETTING STARTED



No matter where you start from, it's worth it

Written By: Rachel Kubitz

Starting something new, especially something that feels as big as exercise, often seems daunting. However, there is no need to dive into anything intense or extreme. The truth is, you do not need to become an athlete or spend hours at the gym. You just need to start small, move a little more than you did yesterday, and build from there. Once you have chatted with a healthcare provider about exercise, begin with something simple like stretching in the morning or walking for just five minutes a day. You could march in place during a commercial break or do a few arm circles while waiting for your coffee to brew. These little moments of movement matter, and they can make a difference over time.

Barriers to Exercise

It is no secret that Parkinson's can bring on things like stiffness, pain, or balance problems. These physical changes can make even simple movements feel difficult, and that can be discouraging. Maybe your body feels tight when you wake up, or maybe you feel unsteady on your feet and worry about falling. These are real and valid concerns. But here is the good news, you can still move your body, even with these challenges. You just might need to adjust how you do it.

If you feel stiff, try starting your day with a gentle stretch, nothing fancy, just some slow shoulder rolls, neck stretches, or ankle circles while sitting in a chair. Stretching in the morning can help loosen your muscles and get you feeling more comfortable. If balance is something you are worried about, do your exercises near a wall or a countertop so you can hold on for support. You can also do many exercises from a seated position if standing feels unsafe. And if pain is



getting in the way, try smaller movements or exercises in water at a pool or water aerobics class. Exercising in water can help reduce pressure on your joints. The key is to move in a way that feels safe and doable for you. Remember that no matter how small, every moment counts.

Mental barriers can be just as tough as physical ones, and sometimes even harder to talk about. If you have been feeling low on motivation, tired all the time, or like you just do not care much anymore, you are not alone. Many people with Parkinson's experience apathy, fatigue, or fear around movement. Maybe you are afraid of falling, or maybe it just feels like too much to deal with. And that is okay. These feelings are completely understandable. The trick is to find little ways to gently push past these mental blocks, without being too hard on yourself. One helpful way to build motivation is to choose movement that feels enjoyable. That might mean dancing to music you love, walking with a friend, or doing a short seated workout video that makes you smile. If apathy is getting in the way and you just do not feel like doing anything, try setting a very small goal. For example: "I will do three arm circles before lunch." Or try engaging in movement while watching tv or incorporating movement into your daily life. For example, taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Even making one small choice difference is a win and is a movement that counts. Maybe the next day, you can add another small activity and keep building one day at a time. Once you start moving, even just a little, it often gets easier to keep going. Remember, the goal is not perfection, it is building a routine that is fun, safe and breeds consistency.

You may feel fatigued often which can make exercise seem impossible. Some days, your body and brain feel completely drained. On those days, it is okay to rest, but even light movement like stretching or slow walking can actually help boost your energy over time.

Then there are social and financial barriers. Maybe you do not have a workout buddy, or maybe classes and equipment feel too expensive. These are all valid concerns, but there are ways to work around even these barriers too. If going out is not easy, look for free online videos or gentle movement programs made for people with Parkinson's. No fancy equipment is needed, your body is enough. If you feel like you do need some resistance, think of it as an opportunity to practice your creativity skills. For example, using soup cans instead of weights, or using a stretchy piece of clothing as a resistance band. Your doctor, physical therapist or those of us at the Parkinson Association are happy to guide you in movement plans that are safe and accessible to you. And if you are worried about exercising alone, ask a friend or family member to join you.



Making a Plan

Staying active is easier when you have a plan. Try setting a time every day, even just 10 minutes, to move your body. Whether it is stretching after you wake up, completing the exercises on the tear away page, or going for a walk after dinner. When it becomes part of your daily routine, it takes less effort to get started. Routines give structure, and structure helps you stay consistent, even on tough days. Of course, life can

still get in the way. Things like low energy, feeling discouraged, a bad night's sleep, or even changes in medication can impact how you feel. Consistency is not about perfection, it is about doing your best, whatever your best looks like for that day. Some days will be better than others, just do not let a hard day turn into giving up altogether. You may notice that at certain times of the day you have more energy. Take note of when you feel your best during the day and when you take medications as these may be related. Try to structure your exercise routine for the time you feel best.



If you find yourself slipping out of routine, finding someone to help keep you accountable can be a great way to stay motivated. This could be a friend, a support group, or even writing it down in a calendar. Celebrate your wins, even the small ones, like walking farther than you did last week or making the choice to take the stairs instead of the elevator. These victories add up. You do not have to be the best. You just have to keep trying. Getting started is often the hardest part, but once you begin to feel the benefits like better sleep, less stiffness, and improved mood, it becomes easier to keep going. And remember, the goal is not to do more than anyone else, it is to move your body in a way that works for you. You have already taken the first step by asking how to begin. That shows courage, and that is something to be proud of.

Final Thoughts

No matter where you are starting from, movement is possible, and it is worth it. Barriers can be difficult to overcome but I hope now you have some ideas on how to address these challenges. If this has sparked a little creativity, helping you feel more confident in solving challenges, reaching out for support when needed, and maybe even feeling a bit curious or excited about exercise, then I would say I have met my goal. Whether you are stretching in your chair, walking with a friend, or dancing in your kitchen, every step you take helps your body and your mind. You do not have to do it perfectly, and you do not have to do it alone. There will be good days and harder ones, but what matters most is showing up for yourself in whatever way you can. Over time, these small choices can lead to big changes. So, take a deep breath, give yourself credit for what you have already done, and know that it is never too late to start moving forward. Remember to have fun in the process and enjoy the journey.



SAFETY FIRST

Written By: Rachel Kubitz

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.



Exercise and Care Partners

Caring For Someone Else Also Means Caring For Yourself

Written By: Rachel Kubitz

Caring for someone with Parkinson's is an act of love, but it can be very demanding. Whether you are helping with daily tasks, going to appointments, or just being there emotionally, caregiving takes a lot of energy, both physically and mentally. That is why it is so important to take care of yourself, too. One of the ways to do that? Exercise.

You might feel like there is never enough time while caring for someone else and taking time for yourself might even bring feelings of guilt. Feeling that way is completely fair and valid. Before we can help others, we must first help ourselves. With exercise, even a few minutes of movement a day can help you feel stronger, less stressed, and more energetic. Exercise is more than fitness; it is a way to recharge your battery, take time just for you and prioritize your health.

Remember that your health is just as important. Exercise is essential for everyone. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Exercise strengthens your muscles and heart which can make daily activities like bringing in the groceries or walking upstairs easier. Exercise like dancing, swimming or walking can improve sleep quality allowing you to wake up feeling more refreshed. Beyond physical health, exercise boosts mental well-being by releasing feel-good chemicals in the brain, which reduces stress, anxiety, and depression. In addition, physical activity can be a great opportunity to meet new people, make friends, and connect with others with similar interests.

Caregiving can sometimes feel isolating, frustrating, overwhelming, or simply exhausting. These are understandable feelings, and it is okay to feel whatever emotions are coming up for you. It is important to

prioritize your mental health too and find support. Exercise can be a great opportunity to meet new friends and find a support system. Joining exercise groups or classes that suit your interests may also improve mood and enhance feelings of connection. By spending time with others and engaging in physical activity, this can help to get your mind off caregiving and put the focus back on you. If joining a fitness class or a gym is not an option for you. There are many ways to be physically active at home or outside.

Whether it is watching a yoga class on YouTube, or dancing in the kitchen while dinner's cooking, moving your body gives your brain a chance to reset. Even walking around your block, doing stretches while watching your favorite Friday night movie, or lifting some light weights in your living room provide benefits that build up over time. If you enjoy it, you are more likely to stick with it, so choose something that fits into your life and makes you feel good.

At the end of the day, caring for someone else means caring for yourself, too. Your health matters too. Not only does exercise improve overall health and prevent illness, but it also gives you dedicated time just for you. You are doing something amazing for someone else, and you deserve to feel strong, supported, and happy too. Exercise is one way to help make that happen, one small step at a time. Taking care of someone with Parkinson's is an act of love, but taking care of yourself is an act of self-love and is just as important. Exercise is a simple yet powerful way to support your body, protect your mental health, and build the strength. Remember, even small steps add up. Thank you for all you do for your loved one, and do not forget to take a break to care for yourself too, you deserve it.



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On Target

Tracking your heart rate when exercising



When you are exercising it can sometimes be difficult to determine if you are doing too much or not enough. An easy way to make that determination is by monitoring your heart rate (pulse) to see if you are hitting your Target Heart Rate. While there are many monitors that can be purchased or are often part of a piece of exercise equipment; it can be a helpful tool to know how to calculate this for yourself.

Before you begin it is good to be aware of your resting heart rate. The average resting heart rate is between 60-100 beats per minute. The more fit you are the lower your resting heart rate will be. To calculate your resting heart rate rest quietly for 10 minutes, then gently place two fingers (not your thumb) on the inside of your wrist. Count the beats for 30 seconds and double this number (or ten seconds and multiply by six) to get your beats per minute (bpm).

To calculate your Target Heart Rate, subtract your age from 220. This is the maximum number of times your heart can beat in one minute. This number is then multiplied by the percentage of your maximum heart rate that you want to exercise. If you are just starting out, it is best to consider aiming for a lower target of between 50 –50% and gradually work your way up.

For example, if you are 63 years old:

$220-63=157$: This is your maximum heart rate

If you want to exercise at 55% of your maximum heart rate:

$157 \times .55=86$: This is your Target Heart Rate

The following chart generalizes age range and indicates Target Heart Rates for both moderate (50-69%) and intense (70-less than 90%) physical activity.

Age	Target Heart Rate	
	50%	85%
30	95	162
40	90	153
50	85	145
60	80	136
70	75	128
80	70	119

CAUTION: It is extremely important to note that if you have a heart condition, are taking medications that affect heart rate, or are in cardiac rehabilitation it is IMPERATIVE that you consult your medical practitioner before starting ANY exercise program, as she/he will determine what your target heart rate should be and/or whether or not you need to be monitored while engaging in physical activity.

You should check your heart rate periodically throughout your exercise routine. If it is too high, you need to slow down...decrease your pace and/or intensity or simply have a rest. If it is too low, you may want to push yourself a little harder.

Keeping your finger "on the pulse" of your exercise program is a great way to stay active, safe and healthy!

AT-HOME WORKOUT

ROUTINE

Now that you have a good idea of the benefits of exercise let's try some. Start by doing 5 reps of each exercise on this front page. Work your way up to 10 to 20 reps. When you are ready, add the exercises on the other side and repeat. All exercises require no special equipment (just household items like a chair or soup cans). Modify exercises to make them easier or increase the challenge as needed.

Sit-to-Stand

Targets: Legs, core, balance



Sit in a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor. Stand up slowly then sit back down with control.

Modify: Use Armrests to help push up.

Challenge: Hold a soup can in each hand for added weight.

Bicep Curls

Targets: Bicep strength, arm stability



Sit upright in a sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor, arms relaxed by your sides with palms facing up with a slight curl in your fingers. Slowly bend your elbows to bring your hands towards your shoulders, keeping elbows close to your body. Pause briefly at the top, then lower your arms back down with control.

Modify: Do not use any weights. Use one arm at a time.

Challenge: Hold soup cans or water bottles for added weight.

Seated Marching

Targets: Hip flexors, coordination



Sit tall in a chair. Lift one knee at a time, as if marching in place. Keep your core engaged. Put on some music and march to the beat of a song if this is more enjoyable or makes the exercise easier for you.

Modify: Go slower or lift your leg lower.

Challenge: Hold weights or soup cans. If playing music, pick a faster song.

Shoulder Rolls

Targets: Neck, shoulders, posture



Sit or stand tall. Slowly roll your shoulders forward in a circular motion for your reps, then switch to backward rolls.

Modify: Smaller Circles.

Challenge: Hold light weights during rolls.

Ankle Circles

Targets: Ankles, lower leg mobility, circulation



Sit tall in a chair. Lift one foot off the floor and rotate your ankle in a circle. Do all reps in one direction, then switch. Repeat with the other ankle.

Modify: Keep your foot closer to the ground or rest your heel.

Challenge: Draw bigger circles or try and write the alphabet with your foot.

Calf Raises

Targets: Calf strength, ankle stability



Stand behind a chair and hold the back for support. Lift your heels off the ground, then slowly lower back down.

Modify: Do one leg at a time, using the other foot for support or try the exercise seated.

Challenge: Hold for 3 seconds at the top.

Wrist Rolls

Targets: Forearms, wrists, coordination



Sit or stand tall with your arms relaxed at your sides or resting on your thighs. Make slow, controlled circles with your wrists. First in one direction, then switch directions. Keep your fingers loose and relaxed.

Modify: Keep arms supported on a table or on your lap.

Challenge: Hold a small object like a stress ball or soup can for added resistance.

Abdominal Twists

Targets: Core, flexibility



Sit in a sturdy chair and hold a ball or pillow with both hands in front of you. Slowly twist your body to one side, keeping your hips straight. Then return your body back to center and twist to the other side and repeat. Make sure you are not shrugging your shoulders and only focus on rotating your torso, not your arms.

Modify: Rotate less far, only go to where feels comfortable for you.

Challenge: Instead of a ball or pillow, use a light weight such as a soup can or water bottle.

Heel Slides

Targets: Hamstring strength, hip mobility



Sit in a chair with a towel or cloth under the heel of your foot. Slide one heel forward, straightening the leg, then slide it back. Switch legs and repeat.

Modify: Do not fully extend your leg. Start with your knee slightly bent.

Challenge: Slightly lift your heel off the floor moving your leg in the same motion.

Seated Row

Targets: Back & shoulder strength, posture



Sit up tall on a sturdy chair with arms straight in front of you without shrugging your shoulders. Keep your chin up and look straight ahead. Pull your elbows towards the sides of your body, focusing on a squeeze between your shoulder blades. Hold the squeeze for a few seconds and repeat.

Modify: Perform one arm at a time.

Challenge: Hold light weights such as soup cans or water bottles in each hand.



SUMMER SOCIALS

  = **STEP IN' STRIDE KICK-OFF EVENTS**

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Airdrie - July 8

 Cochrane - July 18

 Calgary - July 18

High River/Nanton/Okotoks -
July 22

LLOYDMINSTER REGION

Lloydminster -
July 24



LETHBRIDGE / MEDICINE HAT REGION

 Lethbridge - July 17

Medicine Hat - July 16

EDMONTON REGION

 Camrose - July 15  Edmonton - July 10

Fort Saskatchewan - July 22

Leduc - July 9

Parkland - July 22
(Spruce Grove/Stony Plain)

St. Albert - July 8

Sherwood Park - July 8

RED DEER REGION

Lacombe - July 16

Olds - July 8

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July 16



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