

Did you Know?

We've expanded our Parkinson's 101 Education Series to include the following:

- PD 101
- Atypical Parkinsonism 101
- Care Partner 101
- Advance Treatment Options 101
- Advance Care Planning 101
- Government Resources 101s (over and under 65)
- Home Care 101
- Housing Transitions 101
- Parkinson's Medications 101
- Speech & Swallowing 101

and our brand-new Adult Children 101 coming later this month!

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Your Family Doctors, General Practitioners, and Nurse Practitioners

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When you are diagnosed with Parkinson's, your care typically involves a team of health professionals and supports. While a neurologist or specialist may lead the way when it comes to managing your Parkinson's, your primary care provider is just as important.

So, who exactly is a Primary Care Provider?

Well, it can be a family doctor, general practitioner (GP), primary care physician, or nurse practitioner (NP). Your primary care provider takes care of your overall health. They're trained to spot and treat a wide range of conditions and are usually the ones you see most regularly. They can prescribe medications, monitor for side effects, manage chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes, and order lab work. They also check in on your mental health, coordinate referrals to specialists, and provide regular follow up care.

If you've been seeing your Primary Care Provider for a while, they are more likely to know your health history, they're in a good position to notice changes, answer your questions, and support you with both Parkinson's and your overall well being. If you haven't been seeing your Primary Care Provider for a while, or don't have one at all, it is important to know that health professionals at walk-in clinics are also equipped with the knowledge and skills to help you navigate not only Parkinson's, but everyday health concerns

How They Help with Parkinson's

Even though your neurologist may take the lead with your Parkinson's specific treatment, your primary care provider plays a vital supporting role. Your Primary Care Provider is often the first health professional you tell when something starts to feel off and/or identify early symptoms. Maybe it was a tremor, stiffness, or change in mobility that brought you in. Your Primary Care Provider may order a series of tests to rule out other possible causes. They may (many can and do) or may not make the Parkinson's diagnosis themselves. They may seek out input from or make a referral to a neurologist.

Your Primary Care Provider will continue to see you for day-to-day health and help manage the care that comes after a diagnosis. Including referrals to other supporting services like occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language pathologists. Parkinson's comes with different symptoms that your primary care provider can also help you manage. Including symptoms like anxiety, pain, mobility concerns, sleep problems, constipation, and fatigue. They can offer treatment suggestions, recommend lifestyle adjustments, and follow up as needed to help manage symptoms.

A Primary Care Provider may manage your medication needs if you are not under the care of a neurologist (in which case your neurologist will take on that aspect). They will also refer you to a neurologist if advanced treatment options like Deep Brain Stimulation,

Duodopa, or Vyalev are something you wish to consider.

As one ages and Parkinson's disease progresses, you might see changes to your general health. Your Primary Care Provider's role is to continue to monitor for other health issues and helps you manage risks like falls, infections, or complications from other conditions.

Primary Care Providers are often our most consistent health care providers. They are there for the everyday concerns, the ongoing questions, and the moments when you need someone to support your overall health. ■



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