

Parkinson's Disease: Early Warning Signs

Parkinson's disease is a neurological disorder named after the British physician, James Parkinson, who first described its symptoms in 1817. It is a progressive disease that causes tremors, rigidity in the limbs and slowness of movement.

PD is caused by a lack of dopamine in the movement centers of the brain. Dopamine is a chemical in the brain that acts as a neurotransmitter to help regulate movement and emotion. PD can be aggravated by genetic factors, exposure to pesticides or industrial toxins, or by the process of aging itself.

Early symptoms of Parkinson's disease usually start on one side of

the body and typically begin between the age of 50 and 60. They develop slowly and go unnoticed by family, friends, and even the person who has the symptoms.

Symptoms include:

- Resting Tremor—A slight shakiness in the hand when the hand is at rest. The trembling goes away when one moves the hand to do something. The tremor may extend to the leg or foot on the same side and sometimes to the lip or jaw. There may even be an internal tremor as if the trembling is deep within the body.
- Rigidity—Muscle stiffness typically occurs in the limbs but full body rigidity is possi-

ble as well. It is typically noticed early on when the person no longer swings his/her arms when walking.

- Slow, limited movement especially when the person tries to move from a resting position.
- Weakness of face and throat muscles. Talking and swallowing become more difficult and speech becomes softer and monotonous.
- Difficulty with walking and balance.

A diagnosis of Parkinson's disease is based on medical history and a thorough neurological exam.

Long Island Elder Care Resource:

Good Samaritan Senior Assessment program is a specialized consultation clinic that helps older adults and families to optimize physical, psychological and functional health. The assessment includes a complete physical examination along with specialized mood, memory and medication screenings.

The Senior Assessment offers a first step in addressing concerns and creating a workable plan of care. Senior citizens or caregivers who have concerns about any of the following

aging issues should schedule an appointment:

- Multiple medications
- Memory changes
- Mood changes
- Driving problems
- Falls and safety concerns
- Care planning
- Declining ability in dressing, bathing, toileting, hygiene, walking or eating.

Appointments can be made by calling 631-376-3671.

Upcoming Events

Sep. 28—9:30 am to 2 pm
Resource Fair
Stony Brook University
Medical Center



Family First Home Companions

150 Motor Pkwy. Suite 401
Hauppauge, N.Y. 11788
P: 631-439-6829
F: 631-813-4634