

# PARKINSON

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## Sleep and Parkinson's Disease

A Commonly Overlooked Condition  
Moves to the Forefront



**S**leep problems are a fact of life for nearly 80 percent of people with Parkinson's disease (PD). Yet sleep disorders remain underreported by patients and underdiagnosed by physicians, despite a growing number of effective therapies available to treat them.

Over the last decade, the Parkinson's medical community has heard the call to recognize the significance of sleep dysfunction, and the negative impact it has had on the lives of patients and caregivers. Besides exposing sufferers to safety risks and diminishing their quality of life, poor sleep often worsens Parkinson's symptoms and increases the risk of depression.

While disturbed sleep patterns tend to worsen as PD progresses, sleep symptoms also appear in the early stages of the disease. New research suggests that poor nocturnal sleep and longstanding daytime sleepiness may be risk factors for PD.

The fact is if you have PD, you face unique barriers to sufficient sleep that others do not. Some of which may include unpleasant side effects from medications and the occurrence of overnight motor symptoms.

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## NPF Awards \$1 Million for Clinical Research

"Each of these projects can have an immediate impact on the lives of Parkinson's disease patients."

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## Team Hope: Beth Bjerke's Grand Hike for a Grand Cause

"You can dream, it may not be the best time or conditions, but you can still reach for small goals and build on them."

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## Ball Up for Parkinson's

An important collaboration that brings together sports fans, athletes, families and people affected by Parkinson's disease.

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## Sleep and Parkinson's Disease: A Commonly Overlooked Condition Moves to the Forefront

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Here are the most common life-disrupting sleep disorders among Parkinson's patients:

- **Insomnia** You wake during the night and have trouble falling asleep again.
- **REM sleep behavior disorder (RBD)** You act out your dreams during the rapid-eye movement, or REM phase of sleep, moving your legs and arms, talking and shouting, and even hitting or punching. RBD can endanger you and your bed partner.
- **Sleep apnea** Your breathing is interrupted while you sleep, most often because the throat is blocked momentarily by the tongue or other tissues. These brief awakenings during the night can cause excessive daytime sleepiness.
- **Daytime sleepiness** This condition may result in a so-called "sleep attack," a sudden onset of sleep that occurs without warning and may lead to serious accidents.
- **Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)** You may feel an unpleasant, tingling or creeping sensation in your legs and an urge to move them. This occurs mainly at night.

### Sample questions from the Parkinson's Disease Sleep Scale:

- *Do you experience numbness or tingling of your arms or legs which wake you from sleep at night?*
- *Do you have painful muscle cramps in your arms or legs while sleeping at night?*
- *On waking, do you experience tremors?*
- *Have you unexpectedly fallen asleep during the day?*

*Talk to your neurologist if you are concerned about your sleep patterns, or call 1-800-4PD-INFO.*

For better care to take place, patients and physicians must work together to identify sleep-related symptoms and to problem-solve together. This will, in turn, lead to accurate diagnosis and focused treatment planning.

To that end, patients and caregivers should write down a detailed overview of their symptoms and give those notes to their physician. Then, a medication review should follow to determine whether adjustments need to be made. Finally, a consultation with a sleep specialist and an overnight sleep study may be necessary.

With the help of the latest therapies, patients can move past their obstacles to a good night's rest. At the Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Center at Northwestern University in Chicago, there is a unique clinic dedicated to the early diagnosis and comprehensive treatment of a wide variety of sleep problems associated with PD and other neurological disorders. The research program brings together specialists in sleep medicine and PD with the goal of ushering in new therapies.

The National Parkinson Foundation is working with Northwestern and other centers to support sleep research and bring this issue to the forefront. By pooling together resources throughout the community and leveraging expertise, we can make real progress toward improving the lives of people with PD and their caregivers.

We can do many things to improve your sleep. And if you sleep better, your Parkinson's will behave better.

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**Watch Dr. Tanya Simuni answer common sleep questions in a series of online videos.**

Visit [www.parkinson.org/library](http://www.parkinson.org/library) and select "Sleep" under Topics.