

Who Can Help Manage Parkinson's Disease Mood Changes?

If you did not put together your comprehensive care team when you received your Parkinson's diagnosis, do it now! It makes a big difference for your care to have a team composed of many of the following healthcare professionals, who play different roles in helping manage your PD and associated mood changes. Don't forget: you and your care partner(s) are also crucial members of the care team.

NEUROLOGIST

A neurologist is a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating disorders that affect the brain, spinal cord and nerves (such as Parkinson's, seizure disorders and multiple sclerosis). Research from the *Parkinson's Outcome Project* shows that people with Parkinson's who see a neurologist do better than people who see only a primary care provider. **Movement disorder specialists** are neurologists who have extra training in Parkinson's and other movement disorders, so they have specific knowledge and expertise in treating the problems you may face at each stage of the disease.

TIP

To see if there is a movement disorder specialist near you, call our Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636) or visit [Parkinson.org/search](https://www.parkinson.org/search).

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER

A primary care provider (PCP) is a healthcare professional that treats common medical problems. This is most often an internist, family practice physician or geriatrician, but your PCP might be a physician assistant or nurse practitioner. Your PCP manages your overall health, so he or she should receive periodic reports from all of your doctors, including your neurologist and mental health specialist.

Nurses can also play a pivotal role in your care. They can suggest education materials, advocate on your behalf and provide care coordination, and they are often your first line of contact in a doctor's office.

MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS

There are many types of professionals, with different training, that can provide individual, family and couples counseling, direct you to community resources or help you build your social support team. It might be difficult to find a psychologist or counselor that specializes in Parkinson's. However, most mental health professionals treat depression, and many are trained in cognitive behavioral therapy (which was shown to be beneficial in a study done as part of the *Parkinson's Outcomes Project*). For help finding counseling in your area, check with your insurance provider or ask your primary care provider for a referral.

Social workers can help you and your family sort out and resolve issues associated with the daily demands of Parkinson's and life in general (e.g., insurance, housing, disability, familial conflict and more).

Licensed clinical social workers and **licensed professional counselors** both provide psychotherapy and many specialize in treating depression, anxiety and relationship issues.

Psychologists work with individuals and family members to provide advice and counseling for coping with PD and other emotional stressors. Many also perform specialized testing of mood, cognition and other neuropsychiatric symptoms that can aid in diagnosis and treatment.

Neuropsychologists have additional expertise in how behavior and cognitive (thinking) skills are related to brain structure and symptoms.

Health psychologists focus on understanding the biological, psychological and sociological relationship between health and illness. They often help individuals manage the stress, anxiety and depression that can accompany a chronic illness like Parkinson's.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can prescribe medications and who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental, behavioral or emotional problems such as depression and anxiety.

Neuropsychiatrists specialize in testing for and treating mental health issues for people with disorders of the nervous system, including Parkinson's.