

Therapies to Help You Live Better with Parkinson's

Physical, occupational and speech therapy can help manage symptoms and support daily life with Parkinson's disease (PD). These therapies are a key part of PD care.

When should therapy start?

People often begin therapy when symptoms become more noticeable, but it can help at any stage of Parkinson's. Starting therapy early and continuing over time is especially helpful.

Think of it like going to the dentist for checkups — regular visits help prevent problems, not just treat them.

How does therapy help?

Physical, occupational and speech therapists focus on different parts of daily life.



Physical Therapy

Helps with:

- Walking and overall movement
- Balance and fall prevention
- Strength and flexibility
- Exercise and staying active



Occupational Therapy

Helps with:

- Daily tasks like dressing, cooking, driving and using technology
- Home setup for safety and comfort
- Staying involved in work, hobbies and daily routines



Speech Therapy

Helps with:

- Speech and voice
- Thinking and communication skills
- Everyday conversations
- Swallowing (food, drinks and pills)

Do I need all three types of therapy?

A visit with each can help you establish a baseline (a clear picture of your current abilities), connect with a therapist you can work with over time and decide where to start.

How does therapy work?

Therapy is based on your needs and goals. It often focuses on small changes to help keep movement, daily tasks and communication as smooth as possible. It can also address specific Parkinson's challenges. Here's what to expect:

1

Step 1: Talk with your care team

Tell your care team you are interested in physical, occupational or speech therapy. A referral is often needed. Your care team may be able to suggest therapists trained in Parkinson's care.

2

Step 2: Meet with your therapist and set goals

At your first appointment, your therapist will look at your abilities and needs. Together, you will set realistic goals based on what matters most to you right now. These might include building strength, walking more steadily, managing daily tasks like dressing or eating or speaking louder.

3

Step 3: Continue therapy and practice at home

Therapy may be a few sessions or continue over several weeks or longer, depending on your needs and goals. You will likely have exercises to do at home. Let your therapist know what is working and what is not so your program can be adjusted as needed.

4

Step 4: Schedule follow-up visits

Follow-up visits help track your abilities, review goals and adjust strategies and exercises as needed. Many people check in with a therapist about once a year, or more as needed. These visits help you notice new challenges and address them early.

Learn more about physical, occupational and speech therapies in the PD Library at [Parkinson.org/Library](https://www.parkinson.org/Library).



Need help getting started?

Call the Parkinson's Foundation Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636) or email Helpline@Parkinson.org for:

- Help finding a therapist with experience in Parkinson's
- Information about virtual or home visit options
- Local resources and support programs