**ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING**

Sometimes Parkinson’s disease (PD) can complicate the basic daily activities a person with living with Parkinson’s once did easily, like bathing, dressing, eating, sleeping and even walking. It can be hard to adjust to these changes, but there are ways to improve safety while supporting a good quality of life. Review these pages for tips to ease:

[**MOBILITY**](https://www.parkinson.org/Living-with-Parkinsons/Managing-Parkinsons/Activities-of-Daily-Living/Mobility)

People living with Parkinson’s disease (PD) may find moving around does not come as naturally as it once did. It might seem counterintuitive, but to increase your confidence moving, you have to move!

* Build physical activity into your daily routine: garden, do housework or wash the car, as you are able.
* Walk with a friend or family member. Exercise does everybody good.
* Attend a community exercise program. Call the Parkinson’s Foundation Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636) to find a nearby exercise group.
* Move around often. If you watch TV, walk during commercials.
* Play some upbeat music and dance.

There may come a time when you need extra support. There are plenty of options.

**Getting Around: Canes, Walkers and Wheelchairs**

If you experience freezing of gait, there are canes and walkers available that project a laser line to help cue your steps. In-Step has a laser cane with a triangular rubber tip that is more stable than a standard rubber tip and is easy to put down correctly (Triangular tip is optional, not pictured at right.)

**Canes**

* Get a straight cane with a rubber tip. Avoid tripod or quad canes (those with three- or four-point bases). People with PD tend to have difficulty using these canes since they provide less stability because all points don’t touch the ground at the same time.
* Hand grips should be comfortable.
* Adjust the cane height for best support.
* Hiking sticks or poles are also helpful and can help maintain better posture while walking. Consult a physical therapist to determine whether these devices are safe for you.

**Walkers**

* Use a walker with four or more wheels for better stability and to make turning easier.
* Special walker features such as large wheels, swivel casters and hand brakes give the most stability.
* Walkers with built-in seats and baskets can be especially helpful.
* Avoid four-post walkers or standard walkers. Picking up the walker to advance it can cause a backward loss of balance.

**Wheelchairs: Choosing the right one**

As PD advances, a wheelchair may become a necessity. It is important to know what to look for when picking the chair and who on your comprehensive care team can help you make this decision.  
Here are a few tips to guide you through the process:

* Schedule an appointment with your occupational or physical therapist to find out which chair best meets your needs.
* Check with your insurance company to learn about covered services in your plan. Not all wheelchairs will be covered.
* Try to pick a lightweight wheelchair, as they are easier to lift in and out of the car. Depending on your needs and your caregiver situation, you might want a wheelchair with more features for the home and a lighter, even foldable, wheelchair for travel.
* Choose a reclining chair back, which is helpful if making posture changes, have low blood pressure or need to rest during the day

**Freezing**

As Parkinson’s disease (PD) progresses, “freezing” can become a safety challenge. Recognize when this Parkinson’s symptom may happen and what to do after to minimize injury.

**What is freezing?**

* Freezing is the temporary, involuntary inability to move.
* It can occur at any time. For example, your feet may seem to stick to the floor or you may be unable to get up from a chair.
* Some people are more likely to have freezing episodes than others.
* Freezing can occur when the person with PD is due for the next dose of dopaminergic medications. This is called “off” freezing. Usually, freezing episodes lessen after taking the medicine.
* The exact cause of freezing is unknown.

**Freezing and falls**

* About 38 percent of people living with PD fall each year. PD-related falls occur mostly when turning or changing directions and are often related to a freezing episode.
* Not everyone living with PD will experience freezing episodes, but those who do are at a much higher risk of falling.
* Freezing creates a danger of falling because the beginning and end of a freezing episode are unpredictable.
* The unpredictability of freezing, along with efforts by well-meaning companions to force the person with PD to move, may cause loss of balance and falls.

**Tricks to help you get over a freezing episode**

* March.
* Shift your body weight from one leg to another.
* Listen to rhythmic music and step with the beat.
* Step over an imaginary line in front of you.
* Use a [**mobile laser device**](https://www.parkinson.org/Living-with-Parkinsons/Managing-Parkinsons/Activities-of-Daily-Living/Mobility) that creates a line for you to step over.

[**Mealtime**](https://www.parkinson.org/Living-with-Parkinsons/Managing-Parkinsons/Activities-of-Daily-Living/Mealtime)

**Dining**

Stable dining surfaces and easily handled utensils can simplify mealtimes.

The nonslip material Dycem can be cut to size and put under a plate or bowl to keep it from moving on the table. Using a plate guard — a 1-inch acrylic or metal border that fits on most plates — can make it easier to get food onto your spoon or fork. You push the food up against the guard, and it falls onto the utensil.

There are many options for adaptive utensils including those with built-up handles, weights and swivels. As mentioned earlier, foam pipe insulation can be cut and applied to any utensil. Swivel utensils (usually spoons) help avoid spills when scooping up your food. Keeping a separate adaptive utensil set to bring to restaurants can make dining out easier.

Liftware is a newer utensil technology with a stabilizing handle to counteract PD-related tremor, steadying the hand. It is available with spoon and fork attachments. While it is a more expensive choice, it can make it easier to scoop up food and bring it to the mouth.

*The Parkinson’s Foundation is part of the Liftware donation program for people who cannot otherwise afford the device. If you think you could benefit from the device, call the*Parkinson’s Foundation Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (473-4636) to *talk to one of our PD Information Specialists about whether the device is right for you.*

[**Getting Dressed**](https://www.parkinson.org/Living-with-Parkinsons/Managing-Parkinsons/Activities-of-Daily-Living/Getting-Dressed)

Parkinson’s disease (PD) can make daily tasks more difficult to perform. Getting dressed may become a slower process, so changes to clothing and the dressing routine can reduce frustration. Give yourself time getting dressed and discover new clothing options to simplify your routine.

* Allow plenty of time for dressing. Hurrying can lead to stress, which can make Parkinson’s symptoms worse.
* Consider waiting for a time to dress when your medications are working well and you have the best mobility possible.
* Do a few stretching exercises before getting dressed to warm up muscles.
* If one arm or leg has more stiffness, put this limb into the sleeve or pant leg first.
* Sit down when dressing. Choose a chair with firm support and arms. Sitting on the edge of the bed to dress can lead to loss of balance and falling.
* Use a footstool and consider assistive devices like long handled shoe horns to make it easier to put on shoes and socks.

**What to Wear?**

Choose clothing styles and fabrics that make dressing easier.

* Avoid velour and similar fabrics, which can create more friction with other surfaces and make it hard to dress or move during the day.
* Wear non-skid socks instead of bathroom slippers, which can slide off your feet.
* Avoid socks with tight elastic bands.
* Wear lightweight, supportive shoes with Velcro closures or elastic shoelaces, which make it easier to put on and take off shoes.
* Velcro can be sewn into existing clothes (replace buttons with Velcro closures). You can instead buy clothing designed for easier dressing from adaptive clothing catalogs.
* Elastic shoelaces and “lace locks” allow for tightening shoes without tying.

There are many companies that sell adaptive clothing that make it easier for you to get dressed. Below are some options:

* [**ABL Denim**](https://abldenim.com/): Casual denim for people with movement challenges, including people in wheelchairs
* [**Ably Apparel**](https://ablyapparel.com/): Water- and stain-resistant clothing in stretchy fabrics
* [**Alium Adaptive Apparel**](https://www.aliumadaptive.com/): Adaptive pants, sweater and nightgown to help the caregiver and the wearer
* [**Buck & Buck**](https://www.buckandbuck.com/): Adaptive clothing, footwear, and accessories for men and women
* [**Fresh Comfort Bras**](http://freshcomfortinc.com/): Easy-to-use intimate apparel for women
* [**Icon Undies**](https://www.iconundies.com/): Discrete incontinence wear for women
* [**MagnaReady**](http://www.magnaready.com/shop/): Magnetic-front shirts for men and women
* [**NBZ Apparel International**](https://nbzapparel.com/): Casual pants without buttons or zippers
* [**Wings Pants**](http://www.wingspants.com/): Tool for putting on pants and underwear
* [**Xpand Laces**](https://www.xpandlaces.com/): Adjustable elastic shoelaces