**Dental Health**

Maintaining dental health is important for people with Parkinson’s disease (PD). PD symptoms can complicate dental care. People living with PD can face serious consequences from oral ailments. Quickly addressing dental difficulties can help you continue to live well.

**Understanding Dental Risks**

Learning about possible PD-related dental challenges can help prevent future complications.

* Parkinson’s can alter face and tongue muscle function, affecting speech and chewing. Missing teeth can further hinder those abilities and may contribute to depression and unhealthy dietary adjustments.
* Swallowing problems can accompany Parkinson’s. Healthy teeth allow less labored and more effective chewing. Poorly chewed food can increase the risk of choking and aspiration, which can contribute to life-threatening pneumonia.
* Inflamed gums can signal periodontal disease, which destroys the bone supporting teeth. A cavity is a breeding ground for bacteria that can easily infiltrate the blood stream and harm other parts of the body.
* Infected teeth and gums can harbor bacteria that may infect devices, such as deep brain stimulation electrodes, prosthetic hips and knees, vascular stents and grafts.

A suppressed immune system can allow the easy spread of bacterial infections. Some people with Parkinson’s take immune-suppressing medications for unrelated diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis. Others take clozapine for PD-related psychosis. These medicines can significantly reduce white blood cells, a natural defense against infections, increasing the risk for bacteria-causing dental diseases to spread elsewhere. If you take a medicine with a warning to tell your doctor about infections, make sure to report cavities, loose teeth or inflamed gums.

<https://www.parkinson.org/>