**DIET & NUTRITION**

While there is no prescription for a PD-specific diet, to maintain overall good health most people living with Parkinson’s disease should eat a variety of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, milk and dairy products, and protein-rich foods such as meat and beans. Also consider including nuts, olive oil, fish and eggs to your diet, for their beneficial fats.

**Maintain Health**

* Avoid “fad” diets. Eat food from all food groups, following guidelines of the [**U.S. Department of Agriculture MyPlate program**](https://www.choosemyplate.gov/). Eating a variety of foods will help you get the energy, protein, vitamins, minerals and fiber you need for good health.
* Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits, which provide vitamins, minerals, fiber and complex carbohydrates and can help you lower your intake of fat.
* Limit sugar intake. A diet with lots of sugar can have too many calories and too few nutrients. It can also contribute to tooth decay.
* Reduce salt and sodium intake to help decrease your risk of high blood pressure.
* Incorporate foods high in antioxidants (which are important for overall brain health) into your diet. These include brightly colored and dark fruits and vegetables.
* Balance the food you eat with physical activity.
* Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol to reduce your risk of heart attack and certain types of cancer and to help you maintain a healthy weight.
* Maintain a healthy weight to reduce chances of high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, certain cancers and common types of diabetes. Your doctor can help you determine what a healthy weight means for you.
* Drink alcoholic beverages in moderation, as they have empty calories and few (or no) nutrients. Drinking alcohol can cause many health problems and accidents. It may not be advisable to mix certain medication with alcohol. Check with your doctor.

**Ease PD Symptoms**

The right foods will also optimize your medications, keep your bones strong, fight constipation and weight loss and maintain general health and fitness.

* Drink enough water (six glasses a day) and eat fiber-rich foods, including brown rice, whole grains (breads with three grams or more of dietary fiber per slice), fruit and beans to ease digestive difficulties and constipation.
* Take your medications with a full glass of water. It may help your body break down the medication more efficiently.
* Limit sugar intake, alcohol and caffeine particularly before bed, as they may interrupt sleep.
* Talk to your doctor about whether you should increase your Vitamin D intake. Vitamin D is found in fortified milk and milk products, egg yolks and fatty fish, like tuna, mackerel and salmon, and helps maintain bone health.
* Snack on small quantities of walnuts, cashews and other nuts to promote brain health. Also try to incorporate berries, which contain beneficial antioxidants, and foods that may have anti-inflammatory effects in the brain, like salmon, tuna and dark, leafy green vegetables.

**Challenges**

Diet and Parkinson’s medications can impact each other. Levodopa medications, such as Sinemet®, carbidopa/levodopa extended-release capsules (Rytary®) or carbidopa/levodopa/entacapone (Stalevo®), work best on an empty stomach. However, some people experience nausea as a side effect of these medications, and taking them on an empty stomach may not be their best option. For others, taking PD medications close to a protein-rich meal (like meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts and beans), may interfere with the absorption of the drug in the blood, causing it to work more slowly or less effectively. Talk to your doctor about the right option for you, such as taking the drug on an empty stomach or with a small snack, such as crackers or applesauce.

* People with PD may eat less and lose weight because of difficulty swallowing, nausea from medications or movement symptoms that make it difficult to eat. Address these issues, and also consider adding foods with healthy fats — nuts, nut butters and avocado — to your diet. Try bitter greens or spicy foods to stimulate your appetite. Exercise to increase hunger.
* PD symptoms such as tremor, stiffness or difficulties swallowing may make eating certain foods challenging. Try eating foods that are easy to swallow. Put dishes on rubber mats to prevent them from slipping. Try weighted utensils and cups or using cups with lids or straws.
* Staying hydrated is important, but if drinking water leads to urinary urgency, try eating foods with a high water content in place of beverages, such as celery, butternut squash, grapefruit, strawberries and watermelon.

**Tips for Getting Started**

* Changing your diet can be difficult. Try making one change at a time, like eating a handful of nuts a few times a week or avoiding white bread. Small changes can add up to big benefits.
* Consult with a registered dietician, who can help you plan menus and make shopping lists for preparing nutritious meals that you like and that account for your individual needs and the timing of your medications.
* Consult with an occupational therapist about assistive devices, including some mentioned above, to make eating and drinking easier.
* If you experience [**anxiety**](https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Symptoms/Non-Movement-Symptoms/Anxiety) or [**depression**](https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Symptoms/Non-Movement-Symptoms/Depression), talk to your doctor. These symptoms can suppress appetite.
* If swallowing issues are causing problems eating , a speech-language pathologist may be able to help.

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