



## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a lifelong brain disorder that slowly worsens over time. Since managing this disease can be overwhelming, talking with your doctor is a good first step. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

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| <b>Dopamine</b>             | A brain chemical that normally controls coordination and movement in the body. In Parkinson's disease, nerve cells that produce dopamine become impaired and/or die.   |
| <b>Substantia Nigra</b>     | A crescent-shaped mass of dopamine-producing nerve cells located near the base of the brain. Cells in this region are damaged or destroyed in Parkinson's disease.   |
| <b>Tremor</b>               | Shaking of the hands, arms, legs, jaw, lips, or tongue that is out of a person's control. A classic tremor associated with Parkinson's disease is a "pill-rolling" tremor (when a person rubs their thumb and forefinger back and forth).  |
| <b>Bradykinesia</b>         | A slowness of movement that eventually affects everyone with Parkinson's disease.  |
| <b>Freezing</b>             | The temporary and sudden inability to initiate or continue moving. Common triggers of this phenomenon include walking through doorways or turning around.  |
| <b>Rigidity</b>             | Stiffness or "tightness" of the arms, legs, or body that usually starts on one side of the body. As Parkinson's disease progresses, both sides of the body are affected.   |
| <b>Postural Instability</b> | A loss of balance and tendency to fall that usually occurs in the later stages of Parkinson's disease.   |
| <b>Levodopa</b>             | The "gold standard" and most effective drug for treating the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Available in several formulations, levodopa is almost always taken with another compound called carbidopa (prevents levodopa from being broken down into dopamine before it crosses into the brain). |
| <b>"Off" Episodes</b>       | The period of time when levodopa begins to lose its effect and symptoms, like tremor or stiffness, return before the next scheduled levodopa dose is due.  |
| <b>Lewy Bodies</b>          | Abnormal, toxic clumps of protein that form within brain cells affected by Parkinson's disease. A protein called alpha-synuclein is the main substance found in Lewy bodies and is currently being targeted as a therapy for Parkinson's disease.  |



