

Parkinson's: Treadmill training improves movement

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Treadmill training can be used to help people with Parkinson's disease achieve better walking movements, say researchers. In a systematic review of the evidence, Cochrane Researchers concluded treadmill training could be used to improve specific gait parameters in Parkinson's patients.

Gait hypokinesia, characterised by slowness of movement, is one of the main movement disorders that affects Parkinson's patients and can have a major impact on [quality of life](#). More recently, health professionals have started incorporating exercise into treatment regimes as a useful complement to traditional drug therapies. Training on treadmills is one option that may help to improve movement.

The researchers analysed data from eight trials including 203 patients for the review, published in The Cochrane Library. They compared treadmill training versus no treadmill training, using effects on walking speed, stride length, number of steps per minute (cadence) and walking distance to measure improvement in gait. Treadmill training had a positive impact on each of these measurements, apart from cadence.

"Treadmill training appears to be a safe and effective way of improving gait in patients with [Parkinson's disease](#)," said lead researcher Jan Mehrholz, of the Wissenschaftliches Institut in Kreischa, Germany. "Crucially, we saw very few [adverse effects](#) or drop outs in patients given this type of rehabilitation therapy."

However, the researchers say the findings must be treated with care as they are based on a limited number of small trials. "There is still a need for larger trials to establish if treadmill training can be safely used as a routine therapy for Parkinson's patients," said Merhholz. "We also need to answer basic questions about how long the benefits last and what a good training programme should consist of. For instance, how often and how long should patients train for?"

Provided by Wiley

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