

Meal-induced falls in blood pressure in Parkinson's sufferers

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University of Adelaide researchers are hoping to better understand why some sufferers of Parkinson's disease experience a marked reduction in blood pressure after they've eaten a meal.

The condition - known as postprandial [hypotension](#) - can result in sufferers fainting soon after they've eaten, which increases their risk of injury. This is of particular concern for older patients, who are more likely to require hospitalisation after a fall.

A new study involving researchers and [clinicians](#) from the University of Adelaide and Royal Adelaide Hospital is investigating this problem in sufferers of Parkinson's disease.

Speaking in the lead up to World Parkinson's Day (Thursday 11 April), study leader Professor Karen Jones says it is still not well understood why many sufferers of Parkinson's experience such a major fall in blood pressure after eating.

"Postprandial hypotension is poorly understood by the medical profession, and there is low awareness of the condition among [general practitioners](#) and in the community. It is distinct from a fall in blood pressure that occurs with standing, and there is no effective treatment," says Professor Jones, from the University of Adelaide's School of Medicine and the Royal Adelaide Hospital's [Endocrine](#) and Metabolic Unit.

"The research we're conducting will help us better understand the mechanisms involved in postprandial hypotension, so we hope it will be of great benefit to sufferers of Parkinson's and other diseases that are complicated by this problem."

The study is being conducted by School of Medicine [PhD student](#) Laurence Trahair, who is specifically looking at the relationship between gastric emptying and blood pressure.

"How quickly the stomach empties food into the [intestine](#), and the changes this produces in intestinal [blood flow](#), may be the key to better understanding why marked falls in blood pressure after a meal occur in these patients," Mr Trahair says.

"Abnormal rates of gastric emptying - either too fast or too slow - can be triggered by a range of causes, including medication commonly used to treat Parkinson's disease, so a better understanding of the rate of gastric emptying in these patients will be important for this study.

"Up to 50% of Parkinson's sufferers are believed to experience postprandial hypotension, so our research could potentially help a large number of people."

Provided by University of Adelaide

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