

# Recognizing symptoms of Parkinson's disease

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April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, which make this a good time to learn about the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

An estimated 1 million people in the U.S. and more than 10 million people worldwide are living with Parkinson's disease, according to the American Parkinson Disease Association.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects [movement](#). Parkinson's disease signs and symptoms can be different for everyone. Early signs may be mild and go unnoticed. Symptoms often begin on one side of your body and usually remain worse on that side, even after symptoms begin to affect both sides.

Signs and symptoms of Parkinson's disease include:

- Tremor: A tremor, or shaking, usually begins in a limb, [hand](#) or fingers. You may rub your thumb and forefinger back and forth, known as a pill-rolling tremor. Your hand may tremble when it's at rest.
- Slowed movement: Over time, Parkinson's disease may slow your movement, making simple tasks difficult and time-consuming. Your steps may become shorter when you walk. It may be difficult to get out of a chair. You may drag your feet as you try to walk.
- Rigid muscles: Muscle stiffness may occur in any part of your body. The stiff muscles can be painful and limit your range of motion.
- Impaired posture and balance: Your posture may become stooped or you may have balance problems.
- Loss of automatic movements: You may have a decreased ability to perform unconscious movements, including blinking, smiling or swinging your arms when you walk.
- Speech changes: You may speak softly or quickly, or slur or hesitate before talking. Your speech may be more monotone rather than having the usual inflections.
- Writing changes: It may become hard to write, and your writing

may appear small.

There is no cure for Parkinson's disease, but medications can help control the symptoms, often dramatically. If you've been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, you'll need to work closely with your [health care](#) professional to find a treatment plan that offers you the greatest relief from symptoms with the fewest side effects. In more advanced cases, surgery may be advised.

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