



Parkinson's Disease (PD)



Overview

This is a disorder of the nervous system. It affects movement, and it can interfere with your speech. It can severely impair your daily activities. Parkinson's is most common in people age 50 or older. It is more common in men.

Causes

Doctors are not sure what causes this disease. Genetic and environmental factors may both play a role. People who have this disease experience changes in the brain. They lose brain cells that produce dopamine. This is a chemical that relays messages in the brain. Without it, the areas of your brain that control movement and coordination don't work properly.

Symptoms

Parkinson's disease tends to start with subtle symptoms which get worse over time. It may begin with a slight tremor, usually in one hand or arm. Eventually it begins to affect both sides of your body. It can cause trembling, stiffness, and slow movements. It can cause loss of balance and coordination. You may develop a stooped posture. You may speak softly and in a monotone, and you may pause frequently when you speak. These symptoms vary from person to person, and they may progress slowly or quickly.

Treatment

Parkinson's disease cannot be cured, but it can be managed. You may benefit from medications, and from physical and occupational therapy. You may also benefit from speech therapy. Other options may also be available. Your healthcare provider can develop a treatment plan that is right for your needs.