



Parkinson's Disease

OVERVIEW

Parkinson's disease causes tremor, muscular tics and a slowness and reduction in purposeful movement. It can also cause muscle rigidity and spasm or 'palsy', affecting facial expressions and the ability to walk normally. In addition to these physical symptoms, up to half of sufferers also experience depression. The people affected are usually aged over 40 and the condition is generally progressive and irreversible.

The underlying cause of Parkinsonism is thought to be decreased production of dopamine, a chemical messenger in the brain. This causes atrophy of the nerves (neurones) in an area of the brain called the substantia nigra, because the function of these neurones depends on dopamine. By the time the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease is reached, up to 75% of these neurones may already have been destroyed by free radicals.

DEFINITION

Parkinson's disease: a progressive neurological disease of the older age groups, characterised by muscular tremor, slowing of movement, partial facial paralysis, peculiarity of gait and posture and muscle weakness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dietary changes

Regular intake of antioxidants in food should help to prevent free radical damage and support the immune system. Foods rich in antioxidants are listed below. They should be prepared carefully, as antioxidants tend to be perishable nutrients that deteriorate during long storage, at high temperatures or in sunlight. These foods should therefore be bought fresh and used as soon as possible, with the minimum of cooking. Where possible, fruit and vegetables should be eaten raw, to benefit not only from their nutrient content but also the energy and vitality they possess.

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Foods with high antioxidant content

Avocado	Asparagus
Basil	Berries
Brazil nuts	Broccoli
Brussels sprouts	Cabbage
Carrots	Chilli pepper
Cloves	Collard greens
Cumin	Garlic
Ginger	Kale
Lettuce (dark green)	Liquorice
Marjoram	Nutmeg
Oats	Onion
Orange	Peanut
Pepper	Peppermint
Pumpkin	Sage
Sesame seed	Spearmint
Spinach	Sweet potato
Tomato	Watermelon

With onions and garlic, the stronger they taste, the more effective they are as antioxidant foods. With coloured vegetables and greens, the richest coloured ones are the most effective.

Oily fish, such as mackerel, is generally very beneficial as it contains fatty acids, which can aid brain function and also supplies the fat soluble vitamins. However, these fish accumulate heavy metals from any pollution in the water they inhabit, particularly in their livers. It is wiser, therefore, to limit intake of these fish to twice a week, if you are unsure of their origins.

Things to avoid

Substances to be avoided because they are thought to worsen Parkinson's include aspartame (an artificial sweetener), aluminium (which is generally toxic to brain tissue) and antidepressants such as Prozac from the SSRI group (these can worsen the motor disability caused by the disease). Do not use aluminium cooking pans as the aluminium is absorbed into the food and so can increase the levels of aluminium in the brain.

SUPPLEMENTATION

- It has been shown that the purified, cold-pressed fish oils (*not* cod liver oil) are a valuable supplement for Parkinson's disease as they provide beneficial fatty acids and fat soluble vitamins without the risk of heavy metal toxicity presented by eating fish. Omega 6 fatty acids in particular seem to help in Parkinson's (see 'Fish Oil' leaflet)

- Because free radical damage to brain neurones plays such an important role in Parkinson's disease, treatment with antioxidants is the best preventative measure. A daily supplement of vitamins C and E has been shown to slow the progression of the disease. Vitamin C also helps to reduce some of the side-effects of L-Dopa treatment. A range of other natural antioxidants is available, including selenium and plant extracts. Zinc and choline supplements have also been shown to reduce the symptoms of this disease.

Precautionary note: Vitamin B6 helps the body to produce dopamine and can help to compensate for the fall in production in the individuals affected. However, high dose vitamin B6 supplements should not be taken during treatment with L-Dopa, as this could cause excessively high dopamine levels.

For recommended suppliers and supplement advice please contact Pauline

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HOMEOPATHY

In addition to the foregoing dietary recommendations treatment by a qualified homeopath can give the body the best chance for renewal and repair. Please phone Pauline to discuss this. Telephone: 01905 798567

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