

## About Parkinson's Disease & April Awareness Month

### ABOUT PARKINSON'S DISEASE

- Parkinson's disease (PD) is a **progressive neurological disorder**, meaning it affects the brain and nervous system, which control movement and many other body functions. Over time, it can lead to difficulties with movement, balance, and coordination. There is no known cure.
- **Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative disease** after Alzheimer's.
- Parkinson's **causes dopamine-producing cells to die off**, leading to the onset of motor symptoms. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, a chemical messenger that helps brain cells communicate and control movement, mood, and other functions.
- **More than 17,500 people in British Columbia and over 100,000 people across Canada are living with Parkinson's.** However, the disease impacts more than just the person diagnosed—it affects families, friends, colleagues, and care partners, influencing relationships, employment, and daily life.
- Parkinson's is often thought of as just a tremor, but **the disease has a wide range of hidden symptoms** that affect each person differently. While some experience tremors, others may not.
- Common motor symptoms include tremor (shaking), slowness of movement, muscle stiffness, and impaired balance. Another common symptom is freezing, where a person with Parkinson's suddenly feels stuck in place and unable to take a step, often occurring when walking through doorways, turning, or navigating tight spaces.
- Some individuals with Parkinson's experience dyskinesia, a side effect of long-term levodopa use that causes involuntary, erratic movements such as twisting, writhing, or excessive fidgeting. Although not a symptom of the disease itself, dyskinesia is often misunderstood, leading to stigma or mistaken assumptions about a person's condition or behavior. This can create challenges in social interactions and public perception.
- **Non-motor symptoms can be just as impactful** and may include fatigue, speech and writing difficulties, sleep disorders, cognitive changes, anxiety, depression, and more.
- Since **there is no cure, treatment focuses on managing symptoms** through medication, exercise, and therapy.
- Levodopa is one of the most common treatments, as it helps replenish dopamine levels in the brain.
- **Exercise is a key part of managing Parkinson's.** Research suggests that challenging yourself with structured, high-intensity exercise—under the guidance of an appropriate medical professional—can help improve mobility, balance, and strength, and may slow the progression of the disease.

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### PARKINSON SOCIETY BRITISH COLUMBIA

Established in 1969, Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC) is a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to supporting individuals affected by Parkinson's disease.

Our mission is to empower the Parkinson's community in British Columbia by providing resources and services to enable self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.

Our work is made possible by donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, and the efforts of our volunteers. We strive to enhance quality of life for those affected by Parkinson's through education, support services, advocacy initiatives, investment in research, and the funding of allied health positions within various healthcare authorities.

Our services include:

- **Educational events**, including workshops, conferences, webinars, exercise classes, and community talks.
- **Educational materials** for people with Parkinson's, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

- Free, short-term, confidential **counselling** for individuals and families impacted by Parkinson's.
- Easing the burden of **healthcare navigation** by providing support adapted to individual needs.
- **Virtual physiotherapy**, a free program for individuals facing barriers to accessing in-person care.
- Over 50 volunteer-led **support groups** in communities across the province and online.
- Youth Connect, a **program designed to connect youth impacted by Parkinson's disease** through information sharing, community building, and activities.
- **Investment in research** to advance treatments and improve care for people with Parkinson's.
- **Funding of allied health positions** in various healthcare authorities to expand specialized Parkinson's care in British Columbia.
- Viewpoints, a **quarterly magazine publication** featuring the latest research, Q&A with experts, tips for living well, upcoming events, and more.
- PD Connect®, a **referral program for healthcare professionals** treating people with Parkinson's.
- **Bursaries for allied health professionals**, supporting further education on Parkinson's care.
- Information, consultations, and referrals through our **toll-free information line and email**.

Questions about our programs and services? Contact Parkinson Society BC at [info@parkinson.bc.ca](mailto:info@parkinson.bc.ca).

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## ABOUT PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Every April, we dedicate the month to raising awareness of Parkinson's disease and its far-reaching impact. More than 17,500 British Columbians are diagnosed with Parkinson's, but the effects extend beyond those living with the disease—family members, friends, colleagues, and care partners are also impacted. Expanding public understanding can lead to greater advocacy for improved care, resources, and support, ultimately enhancing quality of life for those affected.

This year, we want to share that Parkinson Society BC is there for everyone, no matter where they are in their journey. While many recognize the visible motor symptoms, fewer people understand the wide range of symptoms—both motor and non-motor—that affect daily life. Parkinson's is experienced differently by each person, and it impacts a diverse community of individuals across all ages, genders, and backgrounds. The services we offer aim to improve quality of life, and above all else, remind everyone that no one has to face Parkinson's alone.

Our 2026 Awareness Campaign Highlights:

- **Highlighting services** we offer, providing awareness of the vast array of tools and resources available to help the Parkinson's community across the province.
- **Looking back** at Awareness efforts from previous years, revisiting the special moments and people that made them possible.
- **Challenging misconceptions** about Parkinson's by reducing misunderstandings, dispelling myths, and working to break down stigma.
- **The importance of living well** with Parkinson's, through self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.
- **Community ties and peer support**, bringing together individuals across British Columbia to foster connection, understanding, and shared experiences.

**To mark World Parkinson's Day on April 11**, individuals affected by Parkinson's are encouraged to share their experiences using the hashtag #MoreThanATremor to highlight the realities of living with the disease.

How Community Partners Are Supporting Awareness Month:

- Lighting up facilities or landmarks in mid-toned blue on World Parkinson's Day (April 11), as a part of a global initiative to expand awareness and understanding of Parkinson's disease.

- Providing sponsorships and in-kind donations for advertising, such as radio public service announcements.
- Libraries and community centres across British Columbia are participating by displaying educational materials, curated reading lists, and posters about Parkinson's disease. These displays help inform the public and encourage community engagement.

### How You Can Support the Parkinson's Community in BC

- 🍇 Share our [April Awareness campaign](#) on social media.
- 🍇 [Learn about Parkinson's disease](#), its symptoms, and treatments.
- 🍇 [Fundraise](#) for Parkinson Society BC by hosting a community event.
- 🍇 [Volunteer](#) at education and fundraising events.
- 🍇 Advocate for better patient outcomes by [joining our network of Advocacy Ambassadors](#).
- 🍇 Sign up to receive updates by [subscribing to our email list](#).
- 🍇 [Participate in a research study](#) as a person with Parkinson's or a control subject.
- 🍇 [Make a donation](#) to help fund essential programs, advocacy efforts, and research initiatives.

For more information about this year's campaign, visit [www.parkinson.bc.ca/awareness](http://www.parkinson.bc.ca/awareness).