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## Parkinson's Disease

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## Parkinson's Disease

### What is Parkinson's disease?

Parkinson's disease causes problems in the nerve cells in the brain that control muscle movement. Nerve cells that make a chemical called dopamine normally send signals that help coordinate your movements. In people who have Parkinson's disease, these cells die or do not work properly. The disease's effects get worse over time.

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### What are the symptoms of Parkinson's disease?

People who have Parkinson's disease experience tremors or shaking as a result of the damage to their nerve cells. Tremors caused by Parkinson's get worse when the person is at rest and better when the person moves. The tremor may affect one side of the body more than the other, and can affect the lower jaw, arms and legs. Handwriting may also look "shaky" and smaller than usual. Other symptoms of Parkinson's disease include nightmares, depression, extra saliva, difficulty walking or buttoning clothes, or cutting food.

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## How is Parkinson's disease diagnosed?

A doctor may diagnose a person with Parkinson's disease based on the patient's symptoms and medical history. No blood tests or X-rays can show whether a person has Parkinson's disease. However, some kinds of X-rays can help your doctor make sure nothing else is causing your symptoms. If symptoms go away or get better when the person takes a medicine called levodopa, it's fairly certain that he or she has Parkinson's disease.

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## What causes Parkinson's disease?

Doctors don't know exactly what causes Parkinson's disease. They do know some medicines can cause or worsen symptoms of Parkinson's disease. However, symptoms often disappear when the patient stops taking the medicines.

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## Can medicines treat Parkinson's disease?

There is no cure for Parkinson's disease. But medicines can help control the symptoms of the disease. Some of the medicines used to treat Parkinson's disease include carbidopa-levodopa, bromocriptine, selegiline, pramipexole, ropinirole and tolcapone. Your doctor can recommend the best treatment for you.

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[Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.](#)

American Academy of Family Physicians

Reviewed/Updated: 01/11

Created: 03/96

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