**Eating Right with Parkinson's Disease**

You do not need to follow a special diet if you have [Parkinson's disease](https://www.webmd.com/parkinsons-disease/default.htm). However, the condition, which makes your body movements stiff or tough to control, can make it harder for you to eat well. You need nutritious foods to keep up your strength and to make sure your Parkinson’s medications work as directed. It’s common for people with Parkinson’s to lose weight, have trouble swallowing and pooping, and feel nauseated from medications. Below are some tips to eating well.

**How to Eat Well**

* Keep your weight in the healthy range for your age and height with exercise and a good diet.
* Eat a variety of foods from each food category, like fruits, vegetables, and lean meats. If you think you need vitamin supplements, check with your doctor first.
* Load up on fiber with foods like broccoli, peas, apples, cooked split peas and beans, whole-grain breads, cereals, and pasta.
* Cut down on sugar, salt, and saturated fats from meat and dairy, and cholesterol.
* Drink 8 cups of water every day.
* Ask your doctor if you can drink alcohol. It may keep your medications from working right.

**What to Eat**

* **Berries:** Blueberries, cranberries, blackberries, and pomegranates are all high in powerful antioxidants.
* **Salmon, tuna, and sardines:** These sources of fish are high in protein and heart-healthy omega-3s.
* **Green tea:** A low-calorie beverage option high in antioxidants and phytochemicals.
* **Prunes:** Prunes are high in fiber, antioxidants, potassium, and vitamin A, and can be a great prevention tool for constipation sufferers.
* **Ginger:** Ginger root or candied ginger are useful for treating nausea, which may be caused by PD itself, or the medications used to treat it.
* **Chocolate:** Chocolate can be a great treat for individuals with PD as it is rich in flavonoids and other antioxidants that help reduce stroke and cardiovascular disease.

**Eat Less of These Foods**

* **Dairy:** Dairy products may be linked to a higher risk of developing PD due to their impact on oxidation levels in the brain, making symptoms more persistent. If you choose to reduce or cut out things like milk, yogurts, and cheese, consider adding a calcium supplement to fill in the nutritional gap.
* **Saturated fat:** Foods that have been heavily processed or fried can alter your metabolism and increase cholesterol and blood pressure levels.
* **Added sugars:** Extra sugars added to food help create a sweet flavor but offer little in the way of nutrients. Limit your intake of processed snack foods, such as cookies and candies. Also avoid other sources of added sugar, such as in jams, jellies, syrups, pastries, and frozen desserts.

**Taking Your Drugs and Food Together**

Levodopa is the best medication for Parkinson’s disease. Taking levodopa at the same time with protein can make it less effective. Ideally, you should take it on an empty [stomach](https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/picture-of-the-stomach), about 30 minutes before eating or at least one hour after a meal. However, that can cause nausea in some people. Your doctor may recommend a different mix of drugs for your side effects.

**Control Nausea**

* Stick to clear or ice-cold drinks. Sugary drinks may calm your stomach better than other liquids.
* Avoid orange and grapefruit juices and other acidic beverages.
* Sip slowly.
* Drink liquids between meals instead of during them.
* Eat bland foods like saltine crackers or plain bread.
* Avoid fried, greasy, or sweet foods.
* Eat slowly, and eat smaller, more frequent meals.
* Don’t mix hot and cold foods.
* Eat cold or room temperature foods to avoid getting nauseated from the smell of hot or warm foods.
* Rest after eating, but keep your head upright. Activity may worsen nausea and may make you vomit.
* Do not brush your teeth after eating.
* If you wake up feeling nauseated, eat some crackers before you hop out of bed. Before bedtime, try a high-protein snack like lean meats or cheese.

**Tips to Help Thirst or Dry Mouth**

* Some Parkinson's medications may make you feel parched. You might try these tips for relief:
* Drink at least 8 cups of liquid each day. Some people with Parkinson's also have heart problems and may need to watch their fluid levels. Check with your doctor about how much you need to drink.
* Limit caffeine from coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate as it can interfere with some of your meds and make you thirstier.
* Soften breads, toast, cookies, or crackers. You can dunk them in milk or decaffeinated tea or coffee.
* Sip a drink after each bite of food to moisten your mouth and help you swallow.
* Add sauces to foods to make them soft and moist. Try gravy, broth, sauce, or melted butter.
* Eat sour candy or fruit ice to help make more saliva and moisten your mouth.
* Stay away from most mouthwashes, which often contain alcohol that can dry your mouth. Ask your doctor or dentist if there’s anything else you should do.
* Ask your doctor about prescription artificial saliva.

**Eating When You’re Tired**

* If you don’t have energy for meals later in the day, you can:
* Pick foods that are easy to fix, and save your energy for eating. If you live with your family, let them help you make your meal.
* Look into a delivery service. Some grocery stores have them. Or you can check if you might be able to get food delivered from your local Meals on Wheels program for free or for a small fee.
* Keep healthy snack foods on hand, like fresh fruit and vegetables or high-fiber cold cereals.
* Freeze extra portions of what you cook so you have a quick meal when you feel worn out.
* Rest before you eat so you can enjoy your meal. And eat your biggest meal early in the day to fuel yourself for later.

**When You Have No Appetite**

* Some days, you just may not feel like eating at all.
* Talk to your doctor. Sometimes, depression can cause poor appetite. Your hunger likely will return when you get treatment.
* Walk or do another light activity to rev up your appetite.
* Drink beverages after you have finished eating so you don’t feel full before the meal.
* Include your favorite foods in your menu. Eat the high-calorie foods on your plate first. But avoid empty calories from sugary sodas, candies, and chips.
* Perk up your meals by trying different dishes and ingredients.
* Choose high-protein and high-calorie snacks, including:

Ice cream, cheese, granola bars, custard, sandwiches, nachos with cheese, eggs, crackers with peanut butter, cereal with half and half, Greek yogurt

**Stay at a Healthy Weight**

* Malnutrition and weight loss are often problems for people with Parkinson’s. So it’s good to keep track of your weight.
* Weigh yourself once or twice a week, unless your doctor says to do it more often. If you are taking diuretics or steroids, such as prednisone, you should step on the scale daily.
* If you gain or lose weight noticeably (2 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week), talk to your doctor. They may want change your food and drinks to manage your condition.
* If you need to gain weight, ask your doctor if nutritional supplements are right for you. Some can be harmful or interfere with your medication. Also, avoid low-fat or low-calorie foods unless you’ve been told otherwise.

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