

Stages of Parkinson's Disease

Each person progresses through the five stages of Parkinson's disease differently, but learning the course Parkinson's may take can help to gain a better understanding of the disease and its effects.

Parkinson's disease affects the nervous system of the human body. This limits a person's ability to control some of his or her muscles. It's caused by a slow, gradual loss of certain cells in the brain. These cells make a chemical called dopamine. This chemical is needed for muscles to work normally.

1 Stage: During this initial phase of the disease, a person usually experiences only mild symptoms. Stage I is also known as early-stage Parkinson's disease.

- Signs and symptoms are only on one side of the body.
- Symptoms are inconvenient but not disabling.
- The person usually has uncontrolled tremors or shaking in one limb.
- Friends and family can usually detect changes in the person's posture, loss of balance, and abnormal facial expressions.

2 Stage: In the second stage of Parkinson's disease, a person's inability to complete normal physical tasks becomes more apparent.

- Symptoms are bilateral, affecting both limbs and both sides of the body.
- The person has minimal disability, usually encountering problems walking or maintaining balance.
- Posture is affected.

3 Stage: Stages III, IV, and V are when a person develops significant disability from Parkinson's disease. Stage III is considered moderate Parkinson's disease.

- There is significant slowing of body movements. Walking may become a process of taking small steps and slow movement, which is called a shuffling gait.
- Early impairment of equilibrium results in the inability to walk straight or to stand.
- There is generalized dysfunction that is moderately severe.

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4 **Stage:** This stage of the disease is accompanied by severe symptoms of Parkinson's. This stage is considered advanced Parkinson's disease.

- Rigidity and bradykinesia are often visible.
- The person is no longer able to complete day-to-day tasks and usually cannot live alone.
- Tremors and shakiness may lessen or become non-existent for unknown reasons during this time.

5 **Stage:** The last or final stage of Parkinson's disease usually takes over the patient's physical movements.

- The person reaches the cachectic stage (general reduction in vitality and strength of body and mind).
- Invalidism is complete.
- The person may not be able to stand or walk.
- The person requires constant one-on-one care.

Working with a care agency that understands the symptoms and care needs for each of these stages can relieve many of the worries associated with the future. **Quality Personal Care** will help to anticipate your loved one's care needs and make life more comfortable.

Sources: WebMD and eMedTV