

MOOD DISTURBANCE

Depression is a very common symptom of Parkinson's. It is an understandable reaction to the diagnosis of a chronic condition and with Parkinson's it also relates to changes in brain chemistry.

Symptoms of depression may actually precede the diagnosis of Parkinson's, sometimes by many years. Some symptoms of Parkinson's closely mirror those of depression: lack of facial expression, fatigue and slowed thinking processes. As a result, it can be difficult to distinguish the symptoms of these two conditions and correctly diagnose depression. Anxiety can also be particularly troublesome for people with Parkinson's, even for those with mild symptoms.

These mood disturbances can have a profound impact on your quality of life and on that of your family. They can even affect how you respond to treatment for your Parkinson's. Left untreated; depression or anxiety can paralyze your ability to control your illness and your ability to enjoy life.

A wide variety of effective treatment options are available to help with depression and anxiety associated with Parkinson's. Unfortunately, we still see the remnants of the social stigma associated with mental health issues. As a result, admitting to yourself that you might be depressed or suffering from anxiety is often the most difficult – and most important – step you can take towards recovery. Here are some suggestions for coping with depression and anxiety:

- Remember that depression and anxiety are clinical diagnoses and are real illnesses that can be treated.
- Listen to your family and physician if they suggest that you might be depressed.
- Ask yourself the following: Has your sleep pattern, appetite, energy level or sexual function changed significantly? Are you more irritable and anxious than you used to be? Are you having difficulty concentrating? If the answer to even some of these questions is yes, talk to your doctor.
- If you take medication for depression, remember that it can take several weeks before you feel better. Early side effects usually disappear as your body gets used to the new drug.
- You need the support of your family at this time. Ask them to consider seeking help for themselves from a counsellor or support group.
- Check the National Parkinson Foundation website (www.parkinson.org) for a downloadable copy of '*Mind Mood and Memory*.'

Parkinson Society Southwestern Ontario gratefully acknowledges Parkinson Society British Columbia for sharing their resources and information.

Source: Pacific Parkinson's Research Centre, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC