

NUTRITION AND PARKINSON'S

General Dietary Recommendations

- There is no evidence to suggest that specific diets or nutrients affect the progression of Parkinson's.
- However, good nutrition is essential to the overall well-being of people at both early & late stages of Parkinson's.
- Achieving good nutrition involves eating a variety of foods each day, in amounts adequate to meet needs.

Bone Health

- People with Parkinson's are at risk for weak bones prone to fracture (osteoporosis).
- Diet and activity are key factors; dietary influences are calcium and vitamin D.
- Foods high in calcium include: dairy products, fortified soy milk, fortified orange juice, canned fish with bones (salmon + sardines), baked beans, almonds and broccoli.
- Vitamin D is obtained primarily from eating fortified milk products and exposure to sunlight.
- Many people have difficulty obtaining enough calcium and vitamin D and may need to take supplements.

Constipation

- Constipation is a problem for many people with Parkinson's (poor appetite, inadequate physical activity, medication side effects, and effects of the disease on the intestine are factors).
- To maintain regularity **INCREASE FLUID, FIBRE & ACTIVITY!**
- Drink six to eight glasses of fluid each day (soup, juice, milk, water is preferred over coffee & alcoholic beverages).
- High fibre foods include bran, whole grain cereals, breads, fruits, vegetables, dried beans, peas and lentils.
- See your physician if constipation persists. Ask us about the *Bowel Management Program* help sheet.

Body Weight

- Involuntary movements in Parkinson's burns lots of energy and encourages weight loss.
- Depressive symptoms, which are common in Parkinson's, can result in decreased appetite and further likelihood of weight loss.
- To eat enough it may be necessary to have small, frequent meals and to eat high calorie foods (cream, ice cream, butter, sauces, special high calorie drinks and desserts).

Swallowing Problems

- Swallowing problems become more common as Parkinson's progresses.
- Warning signs include: coughing or choking while eating/drinking, gurgly voice after eating, excessive chewing or drooling, delayed/absent swallow and pocketing of food in the mouth. People with these symptoms should see their physician and should be assessed by a trained swallowing therapist; diet and feeding modifications may be needed.
- Exercise caution when if taking supplements; natural does not necessarily mean safe and more is NOT necessarily better. The safest approach is to take a daily moderate dose multivitamin with mineral supplement (a variety of brands are suitable).

Protein Restriction: Is It Necessary?

- Protein restriction is not necessary nor is it recommended for most people with Parkinson's since it can encourage malnutrition.
- People who notice that protein affects the effectiveness of their medication can avoid consuming high protein foods at the time medication is taken.

Nutrition-Related Medication Side Effects

- Nausea, vomiting and poor appetite are common side effects of medications used to treat Parkinson's.
- Many side effects decrease as medication tolerance develops.
- If nausea persists, it may be beneficial to take medications with food (e.g., crackers, cookies or fruit). If this isn't helpful, see your physician, you may need a medication for nausea.

Community Resources

- Outpatient nutrition counselling is available at many hospitals by physician referral.
- Speak with a registered dietician at *Eat Right Ontario* by calling 1-877-510-5102.

Websites

Canada's Food Guide (2007) - <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>

Eat Right Ontario (nutrition information on a variety of topics) - www.eatrightontario.ca

Dietitians of Canada - www.dietitians.ca (click on Eat Well Live Well link)

Osteoporosis Society of Canada - <http://www.osteoporosis.ca> (click on Programs and Resources link)

Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults - <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/older-aines/index-eng.php>

Source: Karol Traviss, MSC, RD, March 2007

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