

STIFFNESS AND SLOWNESS

In Parkinson's disease, the messages sent from your brain to your muscles are not processed properly. As a result, your muscles become stiff (known as rigidity) and movement becomes slow and clumsy (bradykinesia). Your muscles – particularly those in your neck, shoulders and calves – can become sore or cramp up.

Untreated, this stiffness can affect your mobility and safety. Fortunately, drug treatment can be very effective, especially when combined with regular stretching and exercise. Here are few suggestions for enhancing your flexibility and movement:

- Follow your doctor's recommendations for drug treatment and exercise.
- Continue any exercise you currently enjoy, but know your limits. Avoid sports that require sideways or backward movements.
- Adapt activities to your current abilities. For example, try doubles tennis rather than singles, or cross-country skiing rather than downhill. If golf is your game, continue to play even if you can't complete a full round.
- Seek the advice of a physiotherapist who can assess your safety, mobility, and stamina. A therapist can recommend exercise and stretching programs that can be done at home or in the community.
- Start an exercise program slowly to build your stamina and self-confidence.
- A regular walking routine is excellent exercise.
- Massage and local applications of heat or ice can provide temporary relief for stiff and sore muscles.

Ask Parkinson Society Southwestern Ontario for the Help Sheet entitled 'Balance and Falling.'

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