

Medications for Parkinson's Disease



On time, every time?

- It's important to ensure that people with Parkinson's disease take their medications at the right time, every time. Medication for Parkinson's disease is time specific.
- Times will vary from person to person and may be different to standard drug rounds.
- If they are unable to take their medication at the right time, the balance of chemicals in their body can be severely disrupted.
- This leads to their Parkinson's Disease becoming uncontrolled – increasing their care needs.
- Care staff will need to do more for the person with Parkinson's Disease than would otherwise be necessary. A person may be able to do a task one minute, and then they may not be able to carry out the same task 10 minutes later. Parkinson's can fluctuate from hour to hour.
- It can take someone with Parkinson's a long time to get back to normal after this.
- Understandably, people with Parkinson's can be anxious about taking their medicines on time.

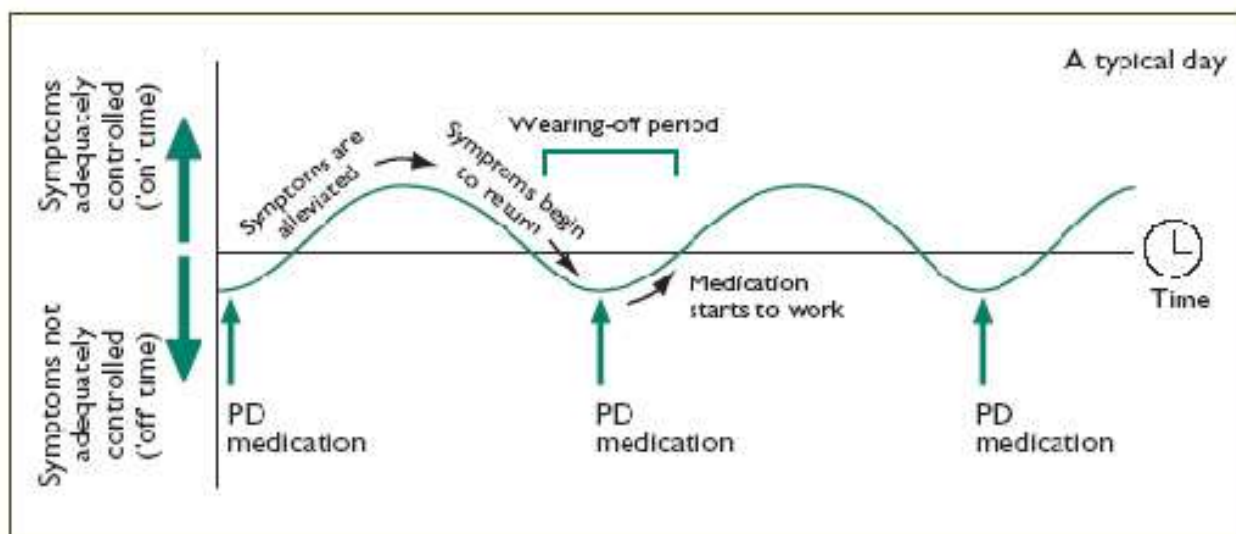
When levodopa wears off

- Levodopa improves Parkinson's Disease symptoms.
- Symptoms can sometimes return before the next dose of medication is due. This can cause their condition to fluctuate, called 'wearing off'.
- In early stages of Parkinson's, the person may not notice when a dose begins to wear off.
- As Parkinson's progresses, some people find that a dose doesn't last as long. These fluctuations can become more unpredictable.
- The effects of 'wearing off' can happen quickly – this is called 'on/off'.
- Being 'on' describes when a person's symptoms are controlled, and they are feeling at their most capable.
- Being 'off' is when Parkinson's symptoms recur and are at their most debilitating.
- Some people describe this as like a light switch being turned on and off.
- People may also experience non-motor symptoms including sleepiness or low mood, as their medication wears off. This can co-exist with 'off' periods.
- 'On/off' is different from 'freezing'. There are different ways of managing 'freezing' and 'on/off' swings, so they must be treated as separate problems.
- During 'off' periods a person will hardly be able to move at all: walking, going up stairs or reaching for a cup will be impossible. When a person 'freezes', it affects certain movements. They may not be able to walk, but they are still able to reach for a cup.
- If a person is entering the End Of Life phase of Parkinson's Disease, they may become more sleepy and/or have periods of unconsciousness. The person may not be able to take medication for their Parkinson's by mouth. In such cases please contact your Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist, GP or Pharmacist for advice. The oral medication regime may be swapped to a patch formulation. This may help the person to be comfortable and be cared for more easily during the last days of life.

Sections of leaflet taken from the below on 11/12/18 and checked 30/3/2022:

https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/b030_caringforyourpatient_0.doc

A diagram of how timing of medications for Parkinson's Disease can affect the symptom control:



Actions to take

- All staff must be aware that the person has Parkinson's Disease.
- Medication may need to be given outside of usual drug rounds.
- Everyone must know how important the timing of Parkinson's medication is.
- Have a resident medication diary and check this regularly.
- Ask how their symptoms change when they need medication.
- If the person with Parkinson's meets the Self-Administration Policy criteria, they should be allowed to manage their own medication.
- If swallowing tablets is difficult, there are different preparations of Parkinson's medications available. Speak to the person's Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist, GP or Pharmacist.
- If medicines are given by a feeding tube, speak to their Specialist about their medication routine and consult a Pharmacist about other available preparations.
- It is dangerous to stop medication suddenly. It can be life threatening, requiring hospitalisation and in severe cases, even death.
- If your resident is going for surgery, this will be discussed, and information provided pre-operation.
- If you are the person in charge of drug rounds, set an alarm to alert you when medication will be due for Parkinson's medications.
- Care with the person such as washing, and dressing should be carried out where possible when Parkinson's medication has had time to work. This will allow the person to be more comfortable and manageable for the carer.
- Set up a Parkinson's UK training session for staff. Find out more: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/professionals/learning-hub>
- Order Parkinson's UK Get It On Time resources. Find out more: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/get-it-time-resources>

For local information:

<https://www.uhcv.nhs.uk/parkinsons>

<https://www.uhcv.nhs.uk/parkinsons/drug-treatments-in-parkinsons/>

[OPTIMAL Calculator](#)

Calculator 1, for patients who can have an NG Tube. If your patient has poor swallow or is Nil By Mouth, insert a nasogastric (NG) tube if appropriate. www.parkinsonscalculator.com