

Moving Right Along . . .

What patients need to know when entering the hospital

It is imperative for you, the patient, to be as aware and knowledgeable about your illness as possible, particularly when entering a hospital for any reason. Remember that the schedule you will follow will not be designed for you - but for the hospital staff.

Before you go

Make a written list of your medications with exact times, frequencies, and dosages. Be prepared to share your knowledge about Parkinson disease, including on-off fluctuations and the importance of taking medications at specific time intervals.

Bring your medications in original bottles.

Be knowledgeable about which drugs can have an adverse affect or reaction to Parkinson's drugs.

Contact your neurologist as soon as you know you are going to enter the hospital. Write down his or her name and phone number to give to the nurse and doctors when you get to the hospital.

Let the staff know if you have a deep brain stimulation (DBS) implant.

During your stay

Have a close friend or family member serve as your advocate. This person must be very familiar with your symptoms and medication schedules and willing to serve as mediator, spokesperson, counsel and coach when needed. **This is the most important thing you can do to help insure a good outcome.**

Inquire about self-medicating; if not allowed; use a pill timer or other device to remind the nursing staff that a dose is due. The number one reason for longer hospital stays for PD patients is the lack of timely and proper medications.

Use a white board or other similar device to record drug dose and dosage times so they are displayed and easily remembered.

Appreciate that stress may worsen symptoms of Parkinson's and that a hospital stay is a stressful event. Use the stress management skills that work for you, such as breathing exercises, relaxing music, and optimism.

Be aware that a hospital stay increases the risk of falls for Parkinson's patients. Some of your mobility needs may be met in simple ways—communicate your concerns with the staff. If you require special equipment, bring your own or ask the hospital to provide.

Walk around as much as possible. This will allow a faster recovery and avoid complications such as pneumonia, deep vein clots, constipation and increased rigidity.

Inquire about physical therapy. Even passive range of motion exercises can help prevent contractures if you are not mobile.

Be aware that a different diet, inadequate fluid and lack of mobility can lead to constipation. Bring a bowel management protocol with you, and make sure to drink plenty of liquids.

Tell the staff if you have any special dietary requirements and restrictions such as limiting protein in meals, which may interfere with the absorption of carbidopa / levodopa (Sinemet).

If you have difficulty swallowing: sit up while eating, and alert staff that your medications may need to be crushed or ask for alternate forms of medication. Parkinson's drugs must be taken with ample water or other fluid.

Ask questions and seek clarification. Shift changes and medical jargon can often create uncertainty. Be your own best advocate!

Know what factors may worsen your symptoms

- **Failing to get medications at specific times and coordinated with meals.**
- **Anxiety, sleep deprivation, stress and lack of exercise.**
- **Urinary tract, lung or other infections (and antibiotics).**