

Living Well With Parkinson's: Key Lifestyle Steps

Research surveys of people with Parkinson's disease suggest that daily habits—especially **exercise, diet, and social connection**—are associated with differences in symptom severity and quality of life.

1. Exercise Regularly

- Aim to exercise **at least 3 days per week**.
- More frequent exercise was associated with **fewer reported symptoms**.
- Examples: walking, cycling, strength training, balance exercises, or group fitness classes.

2. Eat a Healthy, Balanced Diet

People reporting fewer symptoms tended to eat more:

- **Fruits and vegetables**
- **Whole foods and high-fiber foods**
- **Nuts, seeds, and legumes**

People reporting more severe symptoms tended to eat more:

- **Highly processed foods**
- **Fried foods**
- **Excess sugar and refined carbohydrates**

Focus on **whole, plant-forward foods and minimally processed meals**.

3. Stay Socially Connected

- **Loneliness was the strongest predictor of worsening symptoms** in survey data.
- Strong friendships and social support were linked with **better quality of life**.
- Consider support groups, clubs, volunteer work, or regular time with friends/family.

4. Maintain a Healthy Weight

- People who reported being overweight tended to report **greater symptom severity**.
- Regular exercise and healthy eating can help maintain a healthy weight.

5. Work With Your Healthcare Team

Lifestyle changes should complement medical treatment. Consider guidance from:

- Your neurologist
- A registered dietitian or nutritionist
- Physical therapy or exercise programs designed for Parkinson's.

Key message:

Medication is important, but **exercise, nutrition, and strong social connections are powerful tools** for maintaining function and quality of life with Parkinson's disease.