

Optimizing Your Parkinson's Medications: A Patient Guide

Understanding "On" and "Off" Time

"On" time is when your medications are working well and your movement symptoms (stiffness, slowness, tremor) are controlled. "Off" time is when your medications wear off and symptoms return. The goal is to maximize your "on" time throughout the day.

When to Take Levodopa (Sinemet, Rytary, Crexont)

- **Take levodopa 30–60 minutes BEFORE meals or 1–2 hours AFTER meals** for best absorption
 - Take doses at consistent times each day
 - If you experience nausea, take with a small low-protein snack (crackers, fruit, or juice)
 - Never skip doses—this can cause severe "off" episodes
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Protein and Your Medications

Protein-rich foods (meat, fish, eggs, dairy, beans) can block levodopa from reaching your brain. To improve medication effectiveness:

- **Eat most of your protein at dinner** rather than breakfast or lunch
 - Keep breakfast and lunch low in protein (fruits, vegetables, grains)
 - Separate levodopa doses from high-protein meals by at least 1 hour
 - Aim for adequate daily protein (about 50–60 grams)—do not eliminate protein entirely
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Your Other Parkinson's Medications

COMT Inhibitors (entacapone/Comtan, opicapone/Ongentys)

- These extend the effect of each levodopa dose
- Entacapone: Take with each levodopa dose
- Opicapone: Take once daily at bedtime, on an empty stomach (no food 1 hour before or after)

MAO-B Inhibitors (rasagiline/Azilect, selegiline/Eldepryl, safinamide/Xadago)

- These help levodopa last longer
- Can be taken with or without food
- Take at the same time each day (usually morning)

Dopamine Agonists (pramipexole/Mirapex, ropinirole/Requip, rotigotine patch/Neupro)

- These work independently of meals
- Can be taken with or without food
- Take at consistent times daily

Supplements: What to AVOID

Take these supplements **at least 2 hours apart** from levodopa:

- **Iron supplements** (ferrous sulfate)—blocks levodopa absorption
- **Protein powders or amino acid supplements**

Supplements That May HELP

Consider discussing these with your doctor:

- **Vitamin C** (with levodopa)—may improve absorption
- **Vitamin B12, B6, and folic acid**—help prevent side effects from long-term levodopa use
- **Fiber supplements**—may improve absorption (take with plenty of water)
- **Caffeine** (coffee/tea)—may enhance levodopa effect

Tips for Better "On" Time

1. Keep a medication diary to track "on" and "off" times
2. Set alarms to take medications on schedule
3. Treat constipation—it slows medication absorption
4. Stay hydrated
5. Chew medications well or use dissolving tablets if swallowing is difficult
6. Contact your doctor if you notice more "off" time—dose adjustments may help

Warning Signs to Report to Your Doctor

- Frequent or unpredictable "off" episodes
- Involuntary movements (dyskinesias)
- Nausea, dizziness, or hallucinations
- Difficulty swallowing medications