

Drooling

Excessive drooling and poor control of saliva, known as *sialorrhea*, are common non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's Disease. These symptom can range from mild to severe and can have impacts on daily functioning.

Why Does Drooling Happen?

- Parkinson's may cause a slowness in the muscles of the mouth causing people to have less control of the saliva in the mouth and more leakage of saliva through the lips
- Parkinson's causes a decrease in the body's automatic functions, such as swallowing, and can cause an excess of saliva to be present in the mouth at one time
- Hunched posture - rounded shoulders, rounded back, and head down - may increase drooling

Solutions to Drooling

- Adjust your posture - make sure your head and neck are in an upright position
- Try to remember to swallow before opening your mouth to speak, eat, or drink
- Chew gum or suck on mints/hard candies to activate your swallow reflex more often
- Focus on keeping your lips together
- Keep your head raised at night while sleeping
- Wear a sweat band around your wrist or carry a handkerchief with you to wipe away drool

Solutions to Drooling

- Practice some lip and mouth strengthening exercises such as:
 - Smiling really big and frowning really big
 - Pushing your lips forward like you are going in for a big kiss
 - Hold your lips tight together while puffing air into your cheeks
 - Such your cheeks In like you are making a fishy face
- If drooling has become a hinderance in your daily life, working with a speech therapist may be beneficial for you. They can teach you more exercises and strategies to manage drooling as well as help with any swallowing or speaking difficulties.

What to Expect as a Care Partner

- If your loved on struggles with drooling, it may make them embarrassed and hesitant to be in social settings. The more severe the drooling, the greater chance your loved one will isolate themselves from social situations. Encourage your loved one to continue participating in social activities as much as possible
- Excessive drooling may be indicative of a greater swallowing issue which can lead to choking, aspiration (when food particles enter the lungs), and pneumonia. Be sure to monitor symptoms related to swallowing as these can lead to life threatening consequences like the development of pneumonia. Working with a speech therapist is a great way to learn some strategies to prevent choking and aspirating while eating and drinking.