

Stages of Parkinson's Disease

There are currently 5 recognized stages of Parkinson's Disease. Stages 1 and 2 represent early-stage, stage 3 represents mid-stage, and stages 4 and 5 represent advanced-stage PD.

Stage 1 - this stage is the earliest stage of Parkinson's Disease. This is when the disease is at its mildest and typically will only affect one side of the body. Many of the changes that are happening during this phase go unnoticed by the person with Parkinson's and typically do not impact daily life tasks and activities. General symptoms at this stage may include:

- Tremors
- Changes in posture - rounded shoulders, hunched over, head forward
- Changes in walk - decreased arm swing, smaller steps
- Changes in facial expressions

Stage 2 - this stage of Parkinson's is also fairly mild by symptoms may now be affecting both sides of the body, although one side may be affected more than the other. The person with Parkinson's may start to be bothered by their symptoms but will continue to be able to complete their daily tasks and activities. General symptoms at this stage may include:

- Increased tremors
- Stiffness or rigidity
- Continued changes in posture
- Continued changes in walking - small steps, freezing

Stage 3 – this stage is known as the moderate stage of Parkinson's. Symptoms of stage 2 continue to may progress slightly but stage 3 is hallmarked by difficulties with balance. At this stage, daily tasks start to become more difficult and take longer to complete although the individual with Parkinson's can still complete some activities independently. General symptoms at this stage may include:

- Tremors
- Stiffness or rigidity
- Decreased posture control
- Changes in walking, shuffling and freezing of steps
- Decreased balance
- Increased falls
- Poor reflexes
- Smaller and slower movements

Stage 4 – this is a more advanced stage of Parkinson's where symptoms are fully developed and affect every aspect of the person's life. Most people in this stage tend to need a walker or cane to get around safely. Independence is severely affected in this stage as daily tasks and activities become more difficult, and are unsafe, to complete independently. People at this stage are unable to live alone and need a full time care giver. People with Parkinson's will rely more on their caregiver at this stage. Symptoms at this stage are the same as in stage 3 but are just further progressed:

- Decreased overall motor skills such as slower and smaller movements
- Decreased balance and Increased falls

Stage 5 – this is the most advanced stage of Parkinson’s Disease. Increased stiffness, changes in walking, and decreased balance in this stage may make it difficult, if not impossible, for the individual with Parkinson’s to stand or walk. Many people at this stage require the use of a wheelchair to move around their environment and community. The person at this stage will be reliant on their caregiver for most, if not all, daily tasks and activities. Stage five also brings increases in non-motor symptoms such as:

- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Dementia symptoms