

Hydration and Parkinson's

Essential tips for optimizing hydration and health.





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Hydration and Parkinson's: Tips for Staying Hydrated and Managing Symptoms



Key points :

- Staying well hydrated is essential for people with Parkinson's, as dehydration can worsen symptoms such as constipation, fatigue, and low blood pressure. Aim to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid daily, which is around 8 to 10 glasses.
- Parkinson's can reduce the natural thirst drive, making it easy to drink less than needed. It's important to track fluid intake throughout the day, rather than relying solely on feeling thirsty.
- Drinking fluids consistently across the day is better than consuming large amounts all at once. Keep water nearby, drink a full glass with medicines, and include hydrating foods like soups and juicy fruits in your meals.
- Tea and coffee can contribute to your daily fluid intake, but too much caffeine may worsen tremors, anxiety, or disrupt sleep. Limit caffeine to 300 milligrams per day and avoid caffeinated drinks late in the day.
- Low blood pressure and orthostatic hypotension are common in Parkinson's and can be helped by staying hydrated, getting up slowly from sitting or lying down, and avoiding long periods of standing. Speak to your doctor if these symptoms continue.
- If you take levodopa, avoid drinking milk or milky drinks close to your dose, as the protein can interfere with absorption. It's best to have them either 30 minutes before or 60 minutes after taking your medication.
- Sparkling water may help with levodopa absorption but could worsen bloating for those with gastroparesis or irritable bowel symptoms. Choose what suits your digestive comfort best.
- If you often cough when drinking fluids or find swallowing difficult, speak to a speech and language therapist. Also, if you're frequently thirsty, urinating more, and feeling tired, it's worth checking your blood sugar levels with your doctor.





Being well hydrated

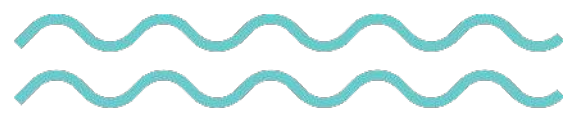
Being well hydrated is a way of saying that a person is drinking enough. It is very important for people with Parkinson's to stay well hydrated, as it can help improve symptoms and prevent the side effects of some of the medicines.

Causes of dehydration

Dehydration is the term for when our bodies don't get enough fluid. Some of the reasons many people with Parkinson's might become dehydrated include difficulties swallowing, not feeling thirsty or having difficulties holding a glass still. The science suggests that when people with Parkinson's don't drink enough, it can make some of the Parkinson's symptoms worse, such as constipation and low blood pressure.

Benefits of being well hydrated

Staying well hydrated also helps your body to do a number of important jobs. It helps to flush out waste products through your kidneys. It helps your joints move more easily and can help to transport nutrients around the body. It also helps to control body temperature, combat fatigue and helps cognition. Cognition is a term for the mental processes that take place in the brain, and it includes thinking, attention, language, learning, memory and perception. And lastly, drinking enough is a key part of preventing and treating constipation.



Signs of dehydration

A good way to see if you're drinking enough is to look at the colour of your morning pee. Ideally, you'd like it to be a pale, straw-like colour and plentiful. The darker the colour and the stronger the odour, the more dehydrated you are.

Be mindful, however, that certain medicines for Parkinson's can make your urine a darker colour. For example, medicines called Entacapone, Comtan and Stalevo may cause urine to change colour to a brownish-orange colour, whilst another medicine called Madopar can change it to a reddish colour. This can make it harder to know if you are dehydrated.



However, another way of knowing you are dehydrated is noticing that you're not peeing as much as you used to during the day. Being dehydrated can also leave you feeling more tired and lightheaded.



Thirst drive

A lot of people's desire to drink is determined by their thirst drive.

Feeling thirsty, or listening to your thirst drive, is the body's way of letting you know you need to drink. You may find that as you get older, your thirst drive isn't as strong as it used to be.

And this is normal. However, Parkinson's can also reduce the thirst drive, and people are known to drink 30% less water than those without Parkinson's. So if you are older, you really have to keep an eye on keeping hydrated.



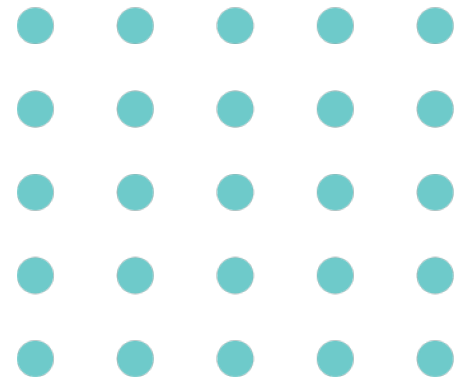
The first step in the prevention of dehydration is to make a real effort to notice the amount of water you drink per day.

Staying hydrated

It is recommended that people drink one and a half to two litres of fluid a day. This is about 8 to 10 glasses each day.

However, this may need to be adjusted up or down based upon your age, weight, exercise and the temperature on any given day. For example, if it is the summer and the temperature is hotter than normal, you will sweat more than usual, so you will need more fluid. And if you exercise in hot weather, you may need even more fluid.

For some people, the urge to urinate can be a symptom of Parkinson's. So you may have to balance the intake of your fluids with your need to pee. If you find you have to dash to the toilet when you are out, then drink your fluids, well in advance of going out and if you find you wake up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet, then drink most of your fluid before 6 pm in the day.



If your urge to urinate is very bothersome, consider speaking to a physiotherapist who can help you with bladder control exercises and speak with your doctor, who can prescribe appropriate medications that may also help.

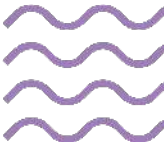
Tips for hydrating

Here are some tips for helping you to stay hydrated.

Firstly, try to drink throughout the day rather than in large amounts in one go. Little and often is much better for hydration. Your kidneys are used to the amount you typically drink. So, a sudden increase in this amount will be flushed out. This means that you have to increase your fluid little by little, so that your body knows it can put this extra fluid towards keeping you hydrated.

Next, always have a glass or bottle of water near you for easy access and to help you remember to drink more.





Another tip is, when taking your medicines, to always grab the opportunity to drink the full glass of water with your tablets, rather than just a few sips.

Next, if you're socialising, can you try to plan that these meet-ups allow you to have a drink together, such as a cup of tea or coffee.

And lastly, if you struggle with plain water, try a dash of cordial or herbs such as mint to flavour the water, if that helps you to drink more. Juices, hot chocolate, milk or dairy-free alternatives on your breakfast cereal, soups, meals such as stews and juicy fruits such as oranges and melons will all add to your fluid intake.

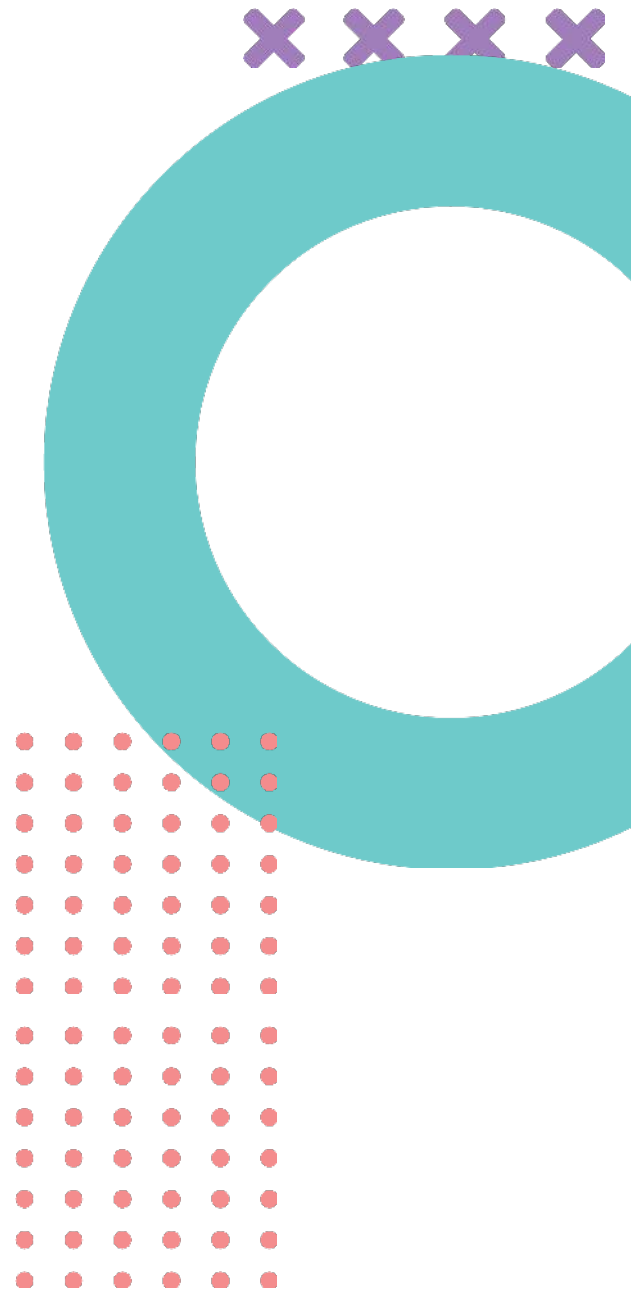
Caffeine control

It was once believed that caffeine causes dehydration because it stimulates the kidneys to produce more urine. However, we now know that regular consumers of moderate amounts of tea or coffee do not become dehydrated. The water content in these drinks offsets the fluid lost through increased urination. In fact, tea and coffee can contribute to your daily fluid intake, helping you stay hydrated.



The stimulant effect of caffeine, however, can make some Parkinson's symptoms, such as tremors and anxiety, worse. And for some people, too much caffeine can make your bowel move faster, causing diarrhoea. If you usually do not drink tea and coffee, and then you start to drink them, you may be more sensitive to the caffeine-stimulating effects on your body. So, if you wish to start drinking them, introduce them slowly and keep a note of any symptoms you experience.

The recommended maximum amount of caffeine is 300 milligrams per day. This is about 3 cups of instant coffee, or 1 cup of coffee made from ground coffee beans, or 6 cups of tea a day. But remember, there are other drinks that contain caffeine, such as fizzy cola and energy drinks. They contain anywhere from 50 to 160 milligrams in a bottle or can.





If you stick to the 300 milligram limit per day, tea and coffee can be a great way to help meet your fluid requirements. And it has the added benefit of containing those phytonutrients that are good for your brain. This is better than getting your caffeine from fizzy cola or energy drinks, which tend to boost your energy for only a short while, after which you may find your energy levels crashing. These drinks also contain what we call empty calories, because they only contain sugar and water and no other beneficial nutrients.

Finally, be aware that caffeine can take up to 10 hours to be cleared from the body. So, make sure if you drink caffeinated drinks, to have your last one by early afternoon, otherwise it could disrupt your sleep. This is especially important for your Parkinson's management, as we know that poor sleep is one of the biggest triggers of Parkinson's symptoms being worse the next day.

Low blood pressure

Many people with Parkinson's can experience low blood pressure. If you have low blood pressure and become too dehydrated, it can lead to dizzy spells. In the worst case, it can cause you to faint.



This is more likely to happen if the weather is hot or if you are standing for a long period of time. The blood starts to pool in your legs, drawing the fluid away from your brain, causing the possible dizziness or fainting. If this happens, it can increase your risk of falling and breaking a bone as a result, which you want to avoid.

Some people with Parkinson's can also experience orthostatic hypotension, which is when your blood pressure drops when you stand up from sitting or lying down. This can make you feel dizzy, lightheaded, or unsteady, and can sometimes cause you to faint.

Orthostatic hypotension happens for some people with Parkinson's because the disease affects the nervous system, which controls how your body adjusts blood pressure. Your body may not respond quickly enough to keep blood flowing to your brain when you stand up.

To help manage this, try to get up slowly, avoid standing for long periods, and drink plenty of fluids. There are also medicines that can help manage orthostatic hypotension, so it's important to talk to your doctor or nurse about how you're feeling.

Levodopa and drinks

Milk or any milk-based drinks such as milkshakes, milky coffees and hot chocolates contain protein. And this protein can interfere with Parkinson's medicines that contain an ingredient called levodopa.

That is why if you want to drink a milky drink, it is recommended to drink it 30 minutes before or 60 minutes after you take a medicine that has levodopa in it. If it is too close to the time you take your levodopa, choose water instead.





Sparkling water may improve levodopa absorption because of the acidity of the water, which can break down the tablet and help it to be absorbed more quickly.

However, if you tend to experience bloating in your stomach from conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome or gastroparesis (also known as slow stomach emptying) then taking a lot of sparkling water can make the bloating worse.

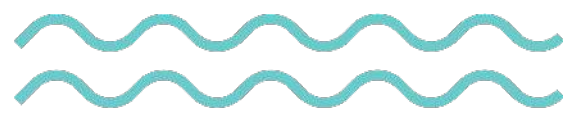
Be aware

The following are just a few things to be aware of.

If you notice that you are thirsty all the time and drinking a lot of water, running to the loo a lot and feeling tired all the time, these could all be symptoms that you may have raised blood sugars. If this is the case, you should get your blood sugar levels checked by your doctor.

Some people may have been advised to follow a fluid restriction due to a kidney or heart condition. If this is the case for you, check with your healthcare team before increasing your fluid.

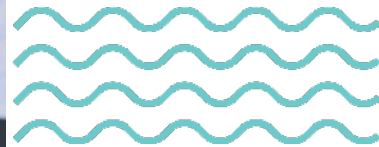
Finally, if you notice you cough regularly when you drink fluids, it can be a sign that your swallow is not working as well as it could be. It is advisable to see a speech and language therapist if this is the case, so they can assess your swallow. They will advise you if you need help to improve your swallow. Exercising your muscles is very important in Parkinson's, and this includes your swallow muscles.



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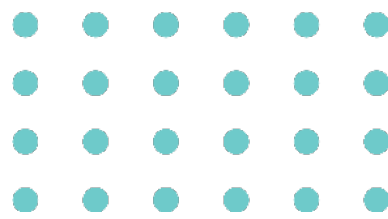
- Check for signs of dehydration and low blood pressure.
- Take a glass of water with your medicines.
- Try not to take milky drinks with medicines that contain levodopa.
- Watch your caffeine intake.

To wrap up, staying hydrated is a simple yet important way to support your body and manage Parkinson's symptoms more effectively. Check for signs of dehydration and low blood pressure. Take a glass of water with your medicines containing levodopa rather than milky drinks, and if you drink tea or coffee, watch your caffeine intake.



By making small adjustments to your daily routine and focusing on drinking little and often, you can improve your overall well-being. Remember, hydration is key to helping you feel your best every day.





Hydration plays a crucial role in managing Parkinson's symptoms and enhancing overall well-being. This essential guide offers practical advice on fluid intake, including the careful management of caffeine and the importance of hydration in preventing issues like low blood pressure and dehydration. By making simple adjustments to your daily routine, you can better support your health and improve your quality of life.



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